Conspicuous Peripheries: Black Identity, Memory, and Community in Chatham, ON, 1860-1980

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
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Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
University of Toronto

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Abstract

The history of the black population in Chatham, Ontario is incomplete by virtue of partiality and distortion. This partiality and distortion has had real, if difficult to quantify costs for Chatham's local black population. While it is a worthwhile and necessary project to recuperate lost local histories for their own sake in order to encourage and inform the reframing of larger national and historically more influential histories, this study also focuses on the history of black people who lived in Chatham in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in order to explore situated black lives that were actively constructed and performed. This deliberate attempt to expand the historiography of blacks in Canada from that of black-as-object to black-as-subject required an investigation into the local history of blacks in Chatham, their socio-philosophical and socio-economic heritages and the construction of particular identities shaped by race, class, and gendered interests forged within a shared experience of ongoing white racism. Informed by census data, primary fraternal order documents, and oral testimony, this study also holds that dislocations occurred at the turn of the twentieth century that concretized class membership, exacerbated class distinctions all while complicating the tenability of a coherent and cohesive black community.
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The space set aside for acknowledgements could hardly begin to detail the appreciation I have for the selfless individuals who have helped this project through all of its fits and starts. I would like to thank Cecilia Morgan for her steady and patient assistance. Her calm and assertive energy countered my not altogether concealed frustration and impatience with certain aspects of this study. With her guidance I grew to appreciate the process as a significant part of the outcome rather than simply the means by which I would produce a deliverable-as-requested. I would also like to thank Ruth Sandwell and Harold Troper for their insightful comments and feedback, without their input this dissertation would have certainly lacked dimension.

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Meeting Gwendolyn Robinson many years ago at the Chatham-Kent Black Historical Society set me on the path that led me here. Mrs. Robinson's encouragement, inspiration, willingness to share her time, knowledge, and fixations, deserves a wellspring of gratitude. I love you and I thank you.

Meeting and working with Maureen Neill was a most unexpected gift that I continue to cherish. The unlikeliest of pairs, I thank Maureen for her careful and caring nudges that
continued to motivate me in my most unmotivated moments. Carrie-Anne Sharp, my neighbour, friend, and fellow yellow of Canadian extraction also deserves an honourable mention for the backyard brainstorming sessions. Our stubbornness, combined with our intellectual and emotional might, was too formidable to let our admittedly fluid racial and national identities get drowned out by our Caribbean backyard counterparts.

I would like to also thank Alain Brisard for his love and support (emotional, financial, mental). His patience often flew in the face of all reason and for that I am, and will forever be, grateful. Thank you for helping me persevere through my doubts by reminding me that there is no spoon. I'll love you always.

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Lastly, my mother Betty Milburn: her name is written on every single page, whether you can see it or not. Her presence here is so powerfully constant it amazes me that she can be in so many places at the same time. Thank you. I love you.

Chicken. Chicken. Chicken.
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Introduction

[The] shadowy existence of the first Chatham ghost—by the way, a colored one—the ghost of a colored boy who was supposed to have been foully murdered and secreted in a roothouse or cellar built into the upper bank of the river near-by, and which at times appeared at some particular spot, then made its way to the roothouse, where it vanishes, probably off to a warmer climate.¹

Croucher, baffled till now as to whether the apparition was animal or human, no longer had the slightest doubt. Dropping his gun he took to his heels, yelling, 'De debbil, he steal mah pig! He debbil, shore, he steal mah white pig!'²

These two excerpts represent the first two references about blacks³ in Chatham within the seven hundred and eighty-four pages of Victor Lauriston's Romantic Kent: The Story of a County. Noted historian, journalist, and school board trustee, Lauriston's 1952 tome was an impressive and locally popular publication detailing the first 300 years of Chatham's history. And while it could be credited as one of the earliest historical publications prepared to discuss Chatham's black population in any detail, Romantic Kent, even in its willingness, rarely moves beyond highlighting a few black exemplars and creating droll caricatures.⁴ Beyond the racist "blacks

² Lauriston, Romantic Kent, 116.
³ There has been a fairly extensive discussion about the capitalization of the "b" in "Black." My preference could be viewed as political, and well it may be, but I take a fairly grammatical approach to this particular question. Capitalization is for people, places, or things. "Black" as its being used herein is not a proper noun and I do not deign to recognize it as such. I would no sooner capitalize black as I would white, brown, yellow, blond, fat, skinny, short, or tall. Where the "b" in black is capitalized in the works of others, I have left it as they intended. Inasmuch as I am aware of the signification of "Black," I do not see it as my place (privilege?) to assign an adjective-as-noun. For more on this discussion see: Natasha Tarpley, Testimony: Young African-Americans on Self-Discovery and Black Identity (Boston: Beacon Press Books, 1995); Constance Backhouse, Colour Coded: A Legal History of Racism in Canada, 1900-1950 (Osgoode Society for Canadian Legal History, 1999). William D. Wright in Black History and Black Identity: A Call for a New Historiography (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2002) offers reasonable solution in the chapter entitled "Orthography, History, and Black Ethnicity," 79.
⁴ To be fair, compared to other works that will be summarized subsequently, Lauriston was one of the first authors to name James Monroe "Gunsmith" Jones, early black business owner "big Isaac Holden," and Osborne Perry Anderson, the "one Canadian definitely known to have taken part in John Brown's Raid." (Romantic Kent, 461). It could easily be argued that Lauriston's was the first work that did not discuss the black population in Kent County as completely amorphous. By including the activities of some blacks in Romantic Kent, Lauriston should be credited for naming and humanizing Chatham's "black presence." See especially Part Four, "Some Pages from the Past," 444-463. Chapter 40 "The Underground Railroad" 444-463.
cannot tolerate the cold" trope, the black ghost-boy appears without context, insight or additional intrigue. However, according to historian Judith Richardson, the black boy-ghost is not without significance. In her research on the history and construction of memory and identity in the Hudson Valley, Richardson found that ghosts often were represented as "emblems of guilt and protest or as icons of nostalgia and traditions," that they were often used as "an alternate form of history-making in which things usually forgotten, discarded, or repressed become foregrounded, whether as items of fear, regret, explanation, or desire." The memory of local ghosts can, as Richardson argues, shape shift over time, suggesting that local populations do indeed use these stories to work through troublesome memories or reinterpret stories to meet their ever-changing needs. Perhaps this shared yet vague memory of a foul murder and subsequent cover-up suggests something of Chatham's struggle with its "dark" past.

In addition to "forgotten, discarded, or repressed" memorializing, the second quote, when contrasted against documentary evidence, suggests Chatham's historical memory has contributed to particularly unflattering early representations of blackness in the city. Croucher was “oddly disfigured,” his legs bending at a forty-five degree angle, sideways, from the knees down earning him the unfortunate appellation of Crippled Croucher, "[t]he only occupant of North Chatham." He is described as a squatter “on the flats north of the river” who kept pigs ("at the expense of his neighbors south of the stream"). One night, upon hearing a commotion in his pigpen, Croucher ran out with a gun, “en dishabille” and thinking a bear to be a man, asked the individual stealing his pig, “What yo’ doing there?” The creature responded with a growl,

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6 Richardson, Possessions, 81-124.
7 Lauriston, Romantic Kent, 116.
8 Ibid.
9 Ibid.
causing Croucher to drop his gun and run claiming the "debbil" was on his property to steal his pigs. Not only did Lauriston resurrect the folksy vernacular of the antebellum slave in this passage, he did so while depicting Croucher as minstrel-like in his coon-isms by creating the mental picture of a naked black man running from the "debbil" despite having legs bent at forty-five degree angles.

The agricultural census of 1851 and the manuscript census of 1861 list a William Croucher (identified as mulatto in 1861) living in Dover (North Chatham). It is not unreasonable to assume that this William Croucher is the “Crippled Croucher” of Lauriston’s amusing yarn, given that there are no other males with that surname who are identified as “colored,” are of the appropriate age to own property enough to house a piggery, and live in North Chatham prior to 1850. By 1861 the William Croucher listed in the census was sixty-six years old, which would put him in his mid-30s in 1830. He was born in the United States in the mid 1790s and lived in a log home as the head of an eleven-member family.\textsuperscript{10} The agricultural census of 1861, however, paints an even more detailed picture of Croucher. Mr. William Croucher owned a seventy-nine acre farm: 50 acres under cultivation, 30 acres of crops, 20 under pasture, and 29 acres of “wood or wild.”\textsuperscript{11} Croucher’s crops included a variety of wheat, barley, peas, oats, buckwheat, Indian corn, potatoes, and turnips. The property was valued at an estimable $2000, with a claim of $90 worth of farming implements and machinery.\textsuperscript{12}

It is unclear from Lauriston’s history when “Croucher” was fashioned into a racialized caricature within Chatham’s early history. As well, it is impossible to tell if the story actually

\textsuperscript{10} 1861 Census of Canada, Census Place: Dover, Kent. Can. West. Roll-C-1038-1039, 8 (Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc., 2009). The 1861 Census does not identify household member’s relationship to the head of household as in subsequent censuses, though it is likely that all of the Crouchers in the household are immediate family.
\textsuperscript{11} 1861 Agricultural census, page 30.
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid.
began in the 1830s, or whether the story's demeaning genealogy was created over time. Lauriston himself was born in 1881; 50 years after the alleged Croucher ran naked around a pigpen. The historical legacy of William Croucher is unknown. He was a black inhabitant of early Chatham, a land owner, and a demonstrably successful farmer, whose life was reconstituted through oral lore and recorded by a lauded local historian as a devil-fearing superstitious and demonstrably cowardly black man. This reconstruction (or destruction) of William Croucher's memory serves as a stark and telling contrast to Chatham's pioneering white owned and operated businesses. It is also an illustrative example of the impact of white racism on historical representations of black people not at all uncommon in Chatham's early history.

As these examples suggest, the history of the black population in Chatham, Ontario is incomplete by virtue of partiality and distortion. Though difficult to quantify, I hold that this partiality and distortion has had real consequences for Chatham's local black population. I also submit that it is a worthwhile and necessary project to recuperate lost local histories for their own sake, while at the same time inspiring the reframing and disruption of larger national and historically more influential histories. This began as a project that focused on black history in Chatham. The focus shifted to a history of black people who lived in Chatham, which evolved into a partial, yet profoundly important, exploration of blackness as an identity constructed and performed within a southwestern Ontario town over the course of the mid-nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This shift in focus became necessary as part of a deliberate attempt to help expand the historiography of blacks in Canada from that of black-as-object to black-as-subject. My foray into the local history of blacks in Chatham exposed nuances often ignored within the

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13 Lauriston's Croucher was not unknown to local Chatham historian, founder and former director of the Chatham-Kent Black Historical Society, Gwendolyn Robison. Unable to provide any particulars, the only confirmation was that "Crippled Croucher" was a familiar name whose significance within Chatham's local history has diminished over time.
wider African-Canadian historiography. As such, while this study takes as its primary focus the presence, contribution, and lived experience of blacks in Chatham, Ontario from the early nineteenth to the latter part of the twentieth century, it will also argue that the socio-philosophical and socio-economic origins of the blacks who emigrated to Chatham are knowable, at least in part, and that they informed the construction of particular identities that were shaped by race, class, and gendered interests and forged within a shared experience of ongoing white racism. Finally, this study holds that the dislocation that occurred in the twentieth century concretized class membership and exacerbated class distinctions, all the while complicating the conceivability of a coherent and cohesive black community.

**Theory and Historiography:**

This study is a logical progression from my 2002 master's thesis entitled "...And Nobody Wondered and Nobody Understood: Canadian History Textbooks and Canadian Black Identity." The goal of that original research was to uncover historical omissions concerning pre-Confederation black history in Canada in textbooks authorized for use in Ontario between 1930 and 1980 in order to frame those omissions as part of the selective tradition within Canadian history by writing in black history as knowable within the historical record. Finding the gaps and filling them in was only part of the project. By applying concepts used within critical pedagogy and identity theory, I endeavored to theorize the potential impact of these historical omissions on the identity development of "indigenous" African Canadians.¹⁴ Had I not employed these

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¹⁴ When I wrote my Masters thesis, I decided to use the term indigenous African-Canadian and defined it as a generational black Canadian. The most important aspect of that definition was that the individual claiming indigeneity could not identify another country of origin. Years later I would encounter the term used by both George Elliott Clarke and Rinaldo Walcott and confront its complicated meaning and questionable use. Clark writes, in "'Indigenous Blacks,: An Irreconcilable Identity?" in Cultivating Canada: Reconciliation Through the Lens of Cultural Diversity, ed. Ashok Mathur, Jonathan Dewar, and Mike DeGagné (Ottawa: Aboriginal Healing
particular theories, the historical omissions would have existed only as a chronicle of hegemony in the Ontario school system, further proof of Canada's Anglo-centric master narrative, devoid of situated meaning or consequence.  

This current study was also informed by omissions and theoretical limitations regarding the lived experiences of blacks in Chatham. Working within the confines of the available evidence, it is my contention that with judicious guidance from theoretical approaches there is a greater likelihood to advance our historical understanding about the lives we choose to research. In order to move into cause-and-effect argumentation, which seeks to examine actual (or probable) lived experiences, it is necessary to assume both internal (mental and emotion) and external (material and physical) properties within each individual and/or their communities.

According to historian and educator Paul Axelrod, historians should be both careful and willing to use theory in their work in order to expand their ability to speak to the past; we should neither be "allergic to discussing" theory in history, nor should we "[impose] theoretical preconceptions on a body of evidence [that] can lead to selective reading and rigid formulaic conclusions." It is as important to relentlessly shift the lens through which we read our evidence, as it is to allow...
our evidence to speak without interruption. John Gaddis' notion of historical landscape will be used as a guiding principle. It postulates that in order to seek "a wider view," which I have done here, historians need to move beyond "[a] simple chronicle of details," and enter a world of abstraction.\textsuperscript{17} This practice of abstraction must be conscientious and careful as it allows the historian to "depart from strict chronology," giving the historian "license to connect things disconnected in space, and thus to rearrange geography," which can also result in "an oversimplification of complex realities" if one is not careful.\textsuperscript{18} Keeping these precautions in mind, it was important to balance a desire to construct the landscape of black lives in Chatham over such a broad chronology without stretching the evidence beyond deductive reason. It was also essential to counter that balance to similarly insist that members of Chatham's black community had intellectual and emotional lives that influenced and were influenced by their environment(s). Unfortunately for historically marginalized and racialized groups, certain historiographical conventions could suggest that theirs must be an abbreviated chronicle on account of the lack of documentary evidence implying otherwise.

Two other works of historical scholarship inform how one might interpret those lives that are lost to time, circumstance, and consequence. The first, Melton A. McLaurin's \textit{Celia, A Slave}, had a profound influence in part because of its rather cheeky subtitle "\textit{A True Story.}" McLaurin's recreation of the life of a slave girl using court documents, newspapers, letters, and the wider historical contexts of slavery in the United States and slavery in Callaway County, Missouri, is a wonderful example of the creation, recreation and creativity necessary to breathe life into lives lost to history. Charged with the murder of her master (owner, rapist, and abuser), Celia's existence was confined within legal documents. It would be fair to say that without her court

\textsuperscript{17} John Gaddis, \textit{The Landscape of History: How Historians Map the Past} (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 14.
\textsuperscript{18} Gaddis, \textit{The Landscape of History} 20, 14.
records, she would be yet another "lesser figure...who lived and died in virtual anonymity."\(^{19}\) The importance of McLaurin's work to this current study is his willingness to use a single document, fortified with historical documentary evidence and contextualization, to not only uncover the life of a single slave woman, but to also use her life as a point of access to an examination of the "fundamental moral anxiety," thereby taking the history of slavery beyond the usual narratives of the social, political, and economic impact of slavery on southern life.\(^{20}\) McLaurin also argues that while the social, political, and economic aspects of slavery were important, "the moral dilemmas of slavery were hardly abstractions to be debated. They were instead among the inescapable realities of daily life, a significant aspect of the society."\(^{21}\) This view implies that areas of inquiry that are most accessible may not always be the most pertinent.

That McLaurin calls his reconstruction *A True Story* suggests that we can tell a "true" story if adequately qualified and supported by relevant evidence. Using Celia's life and crime, McLaurin was able to explore slave resistance, female sexuality, and gender within the context of slavery. Though we may never know Celia's exact thoughts or feelings, attempting to certainly gives us all a more complete understanding of history. This study takes from McLaurin the belief that it is a worthy enterprise to attempt to add to historical narratives those perspectives previously deemed beyond our reach due to lack of first person evidence.

The second influential piece, Nell Irvin Painter's, "Soul Murder and Slavery: Toward a Fully Loaded Cost Accounting," reconciles all of the abovementioned concepts. Painter's reading of slavery through the lens of abuse and psychoanalytic theory facilitated a tremendously

\(^{20}\) McLaurin, *Celia, A Slave*, xii-xiii.
\(^{21}\) Ibid, xiii.
effective rereading of the true "cost" of slavery in the United States. By first humanizing the category "slave" by assuming "slaves as people with all the psychological characteristics of human beings, with childhoods and adult identities," Painter describes the various indignities slaves suffered, the impact of said indignities and the psychological techniques used to survive these abuses. Again, it was not enough to chronicle the instances of abuse; trying to ascertain the impact of the abuse (in the moment and longitudinal) is also important. As will become clear in the historiography that follows, blacks in Canada were too often read as a near indistinguishable collective which I argue in part compromised the view that they indeed led individual lives that were distinguishable. Painter summarizes this phenomenon:

The prevailing wisdom says that strong black people functioned as members of a group, "the black community," as though black people shared a collective psyche whose only perception was racial, as if race obviated the need to discuss black people's subjective development. Within this black community, the institution of "the black family" appeared preternaturally immune to the brutality inherent in slavery.

In other words, narrowing our historical focus could potentially expand our understanding about histories that have heretofore been presented as homogeneous. She too cautions against the indelicate application of twentieth-century psychological theory to historical eighteenth and nineteenth century, but insists that "psychology-when used carefully, perhaps gingerly-provides a valuable means of understanding people and families who cannot be brought to the analyst's couch." Conceptually, Painter's work adds to this study by demonstrating that it is possible to approach the internal lives of the historical actors that make up our narratives.

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22 Nell Irvin Painter, "Soul Murder and Slavery: Toward a Fully Loaded Cost Accounting," in *U.S. History as Women's History: New Feminist Essays*, eds Linda K. Kerber, Alice Kessler-Harris, Kathryn Kish Sklar, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995). Painter describes it thusly: "Sexual abuse, emotional deprivation, and physical and mental torture can lead to soul murder, and soul-murdered children's identity is compromised; they cannot register what it is threat they want and what it is that they feel...they often identify with the person who has abused them, and they may express anger toward themselves and others,"128


24 Ibid., 128.
Lastly, I will be guided by Ron Eyerman's application of cultural trauma theory as a guiding concept. Given the geographical location of Chatham and the time period, I have assumed for the purposes of this study, that the majority of blacks in Chatham can trace their origins, at some point, to the United States.\textsuperscript{25} As well, given this likely connection, genealogical and otherwise, with the United States, the assumption might also stand that there is a deep historical connection between the blacks in early Chatham and those in the United States at least up until the turn of the twentieth century. Eyerman postulates that traumatic events create collective memories and those collective memories leave an imprint on subsequent generations. These imprints become an integral part of that community's identity, however widely or narrowly defined.

There is a difference between trauma as it effects individuals and as a cultural process. As a cultural process, trauma is mediated through various forms of representation and linked to the reformation of collective identity and the reworking of collective memory...The trauma of forced servitude and of nearly complete subordination to the will and whims of another was thus not necessarily something directly experienced by many of the subjects of this study, but came to be central to their attempts to forge a collective identity out of its remembrance.\textsuperscript{26}

The use of this theory assumes that the identities forged in the United States before emigration to Canada do not dissolve upon entry and that they continue to influence the thoughts and identities of those individuals. This is not an identity wholly defined by slavery, rather, it is an identity forged by common experiences of race and class. Unlike Nell Painter's "Soul Murder," which analyzes the impact of first hand trauma, cultural trauma "need not necessarily be felt by everyone in a community or experienced directly by any or all."\textsuperscript{27} Also, because it is assumed as

\textsuperscript{25} This is not to say that those blacks who arrived in New France, or those who arrived immediately following the American Revolution are not significant. It is to say that at least from a genealogical standpoint those particular origins do not stand out in this study as being statistically relevant.


\textsuperscript{27} Ron Eyerman, \textit{Cultural Trauma}, 2.
a "socially constructed, historically rooted collective memory [that] functions to create social solidarity in the present," it also becomes a site of contested representations and dislocations.  

Those who control these representations shape collective memory. Part of this study interrogates the power of cultural trauma and the impact of its presence or absence in the lives of the blacks who would call Chatham home (temporarily and permanently). This study also explores the likelihood of dislocation and detachment when this shared collective memory is compromised or undermined over space and time.

**Historiography:**

This study contributes to and was profoundly informed by a growing body of African Canadian history and anti-racist pedagogy. While reading books such as Robin Winks' *The Blacks in Canada* and perusing Fred Landon's prolific collection of articles about blacks in Canada, I was reminded that the roads that carried my family to Canada were identifiable and

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29 The historiographies of subaltern groups in Canada certainly inform the history of white racism in Canada and contribute significantly to our increasingly sophisticated application of anti-racism education. For example, Timothy Stanley's work in antiracist education takes as its focus the impact of grand narrative on our national perception of legitimate (allowable) and illegitimate (prohibited) individuals and their claims to nation. He maintains that unequal recognition has contributed greatly to frustration among the subaltern in a way that increases alienation from the nation as a result of refusal of membership: "Unchallenged, nationalist historical narratives create a binary in terms of possible (read acceptable) identities. One can either belong to a place...or one is "from" somewhere else. One is either included by the story or one is inexorably excluded. Binaries become the stuff of racializations, their silences the stuff of exclusion." Timothy Stanley, "The Struggle for History: Historical Narratives and Anti-Racist Pedagogy," *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 19, no. 1 (1998): 50. Stanley's work has been integral to my own. His scholarship provided a new language that could be used to describe generations of alienation all while identifying and confirming the locations or sites of negation. Similarly, Charles Taylor's "Politics of Recognition" legitimized the idea that recognition was a necessary component to identity formation and anti-oppression. His influence continues throughout this particular study, as it takes as its subject, at least in part, the omission of blacks from the larger narrative and the selective tradition evident within Chatham's local history that was and continues to be damaging at best. Charles Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition," in *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, ed. Amy Gutmann (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994): 25-74.
However, I, as the reader and as the subject, felt a strange detachment from *The Blacks in Canada* in part because the blacks Winks followed through time were only momentarily depicted as *The Blacks of Canada*. As a fifth or sixth (or seventh, depending on who you ask) generation Canadian, I had always felt profoundly of this place but always strangely outside of it. And despite the fact that theories now abound that go some way in explaining the origins of this "outside" feeling, I had always believed that history had the recuperative potential to lessen this alienation by insisting on African Canadian inclusion within the national narrative.

I was fortunate to come of intellectual age in a world that profited from restorative and commemorative historical works such as James W. St. G. Walker's *Identity: The Black Experience in Canada*, Leo W. Bertley's *Canada and Its People of African Descent* and Lawrence Hill's *Women of Vision: the Story of the Canadian Negro Women's Association, 1951-1976*. Naming became particularly important, as my inquiry gained sophistication; I wanted to know the names of at least some of the individuals who made up this collective so often referred to as "The Blacks." Enter Dionne Brand's *No Burden to Carry: Narratives of Black Working Women in Ontario, 1920s-1950s* and Peggy Bristow's *We're Rooted Here and They Can't Pull Us Up*: *Essays in African Canadian Women's History*. Though both works wrote black Canadian women's history into black women's labour history, their oral history methodology expanded my understanding of and appreciation for the recuperative power of oral testimony. These two particular histories were also significant in their twentieth century focus on the lives

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of blacks in Canada. Historiographically, the history of blacks in Canada tended to center on black entry and black egress from Canada, and had very little else to say about the ongoing black presence and contribution into the twentieth century. Several studies demonstrate the possibility of integrative and recuperative twentieth century black Canadian history, such as James W. St. G. Walker's "Race and Recruitment in World War I: Enlistment of Visible Minorities in the Canadian Expeditionary Force," Constance Backhouse's, '"It Will Be Quite an Object Lesson': R. v. Phillips and the Ku Klux Klan in Oakville, Ontario, 1930," and Ross Lambertson's "The Black, Brown, White, and Red Blues: the Beating of Clarence Clemons." This scholarship also suggests that there is some difficulty locating evidence about blacks in the twentieth century beyond legal records and newspaper reports.

Several histories stand out as further evidence that nuance can add a great deal to our understanding of black history in Canada. Michael Wayne's reassessment of the manuscript census of 1861 left an impression that I could not shake for many years. His review of primary documentation substantiated a perspective I had held for many years: that the black experience in Chatham was quite distinct from the cozy picture so often an integral part of the romance that

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35 It could be argued here that there may be a built-in bias in terms of the variety of evidentiary sources. In the absence of diary or first person testimony, chances are if the history begins in the courthouse or in the newspaper there may be some notoriety involved (outside of marriage and birth records one presupposes).

was Canada's "black community." Similarly, the explorations into the quotidian experiences of blacks in Adrienne Shadd's work on blacks in Hamilton, Natasha Henry's work on Emancipation Day celebrations across Ontario and finally Barrington Walker's paradigm shifting work certainly prove that this is an exciting time in African-Canadian historical scholarship.\textsuperscript{37}

African-Canadian history also contributes to an increasingly detailed cataloguing of white racism in Canada. All of the works mentioned above contribute at least in part to both historiographies. More specifically, a monograph such as Constance Backhouse's \textit{Colour-Coded: A Legal History of Racism in Canada, 1900-1950} succeeds in contributing to each particular historiography and writes across the varied experiences of racialized groups in Canada. As an historian and legal scholar, Backhouse traces the formation and application of Canadian laws to identify salient instances of outrageous racism that hindered the lives of Canada's racialized populations. Within a single volume, African-Canadian history is taken up with that of the Inuit, Native, and Chinese populations in Canada.\textsuperscript{38} Backhouse's analysis of segregation in Halifax, as experienced by Viola Desmond, details day-to-day white racism in Canada while uncovering important new elements and interpretations within African-Canadian history and the life of a


single African-Canadian. Similarly, historian Barrington Walker's edited work *The History of Immigration and Racism in Canada: Essential Readings* focuses on immigration, human rights, and the imposition of power in defining race and space; it also contributes to a deeper understanding of school segregation in Canada West. The inclusion of Kristin McLaren's "Forced Segregation of Blacks Students in Canada West: Public Schools and Myths of British Egalitarianism," broadens the African-Canadian discussion by extending the Underground Railroad narrative beyond that of "popular lore" in order to address the fact that that particular historiography has failed to "[discuss] the experiences" of blacks once they arrived in Canada. Walker's *Race on Trial: Black Defendants in Ontario's Criminal Courts, 1858-1958* is as much a history of black life in Ontario as it is a catalogue of legal racism, discrimination and disenfranchisement. Walker shows quite convincingly that wholly arbitrary legal categories and characterizations shaped the working definitions of blackness and black spaces, which in turn shaped the social perceptions, social relations, and social opportunities of blacks in Ontario.

**Methodology and Chapter Breakdown:**

In addition to newspapers, travelogues, and primary documents such as city directories, this study was shaped by three key sources. First, census data was compiled into a database for every census years 1861-1881, 1901, and 1911 for "Chatham Town." Aside from wanting to create a catalogue of the black people listed in each census, the database was designed to classify

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40 Kristin McLaren, "'We Had No Desire to be Set Apart': Forced Segregation of Black Students in Canada West Public Schools and Myths of British Egalitarianism" in Barrington Walker, *The History of Immigration and Racism in Canada: Essential Readings* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press, 2008), 69.
41 I did not include the 1891 census because the category for race for was not used in that particular census. Though I may have been able to ascertain race by surname, the likelihood of error was too great to compromise the existing database.
and place the data in a format that could be usefully cross-referenced at a later date. This method proved time consuming and daunting at times, but ultimately fruitful. Once I began to understand the data before me, guided in part by Michael Wayne's work in the 1861 manuscript census and Colin McFarquhar's work, "The Black Occupational Structure in Late-Nineteenth-Century Ontario: Evidence from the Census," I was able to read old data in new ways that proved quite rewarding.\(^{42}\) Second, I was given rare access to a collection of documents, the Annual Proceedings of Prince Hall Grand Lodge from 1873 until 1992.\(^{43}\) These documents were invaluable in reconstructing black fraternal life in small town Ontario as they revealed the unique concerns and obstacles black men faced (and felt they faced) in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Lastly, in an attempt to expand the existing body of evidence, this dissertation was originally conceived in part as an oral history project. The purpose was to invite members of this particular racialized group to speak to their own experiences and share family histories in a way that would provide much needed texture and nuance to the existing historical documentation about black history in Chatham. The purpose was to promote a shift away from a solely collective perspective. These experiences could be read as personal and representative, necessary, telling, and valuable. These histories encourage a narrative that moves beyond chronicle by exploring the testimony of situated black experience.

One hundred and twelve self-addressed stamped invitations were mailed to members of Chatham's black community. The list of potential invitees was created by asking friends and family to ask their friends and family to participate as well as asking members of the Chatham-


\(^{43}\) Despite the date range of the Proceedings, the years 1873-1992 were not inclusive. There were several editions that had been destroyed, misplaced, or never collected. The actual proceedings available for analysis include: 1873-1876, 1878-1883, 1888, 1892, 1894-1895, 1906, 1953-1975, 1977, 1983, 1992.
Kent Black Historical Society to suggest names of individuals who might be interested in sharing. Of the 112 invitations, I received 15 mailed responses. Eight individuals confirmed participation in person and filled in the required forms (see Appendix). In total, I conducted 23 interviews of individuals of African decent who currently lived or had lived in Chatham at some point in their lives for a duration of at least ten years. There was an age limit as well; the participants' date of birth had to be before 1980. These interviews were either conducted in the common room at the Chatham-Kent Black Historical Society, or in the homes of the interviewees. Each interview lasted approximately an hour, and each interviewee was asked the same list of questions (see Appendix).

In light of the theory of cultural trauma, I imagined a strained but telling connection between the black lives I interviewed in 2010 and their connection to those blacks living in Chatham circa 1860. For example, I was born in 1978 and my proximity to my father (born in 1948), my own memories of my grandfather and my father's knowledge of his father (born in 1901) gave me limited but historically significant access to my great great grandfather who was born in 1864. In this particular example, there are only two entire generations between my father's grandfather and myself. The legitimacy of oral history has well been established and continues to flourish, as do our explicit considerations about its limitations and power of representation. I accept these as personal memories, reflections and experiences that tie us to the past. My paternal great grandfather was never interviewed and left no documentation that

44 Only two interviews were not conducted in the homes of the interviewees.
could be used to learn his life experiences. By asking my father if he remembered what his 
grandfather was like, whether his father or grandfather had shared any stories about their 
respective childhoods, or what his grandfather may have done for a living, who he may have 
loved or married and where he may have lived or wanted to live, I am afforded legitimate access 
to a sliver of a life that experienced the 1880s, 1890s, or 1901. After 1900, for reasons that will 
be discussed later, fewer blacks lived in Chatham and that decrease combined with the shifting 
(worsening) white public perception towards Chatham's black population caused life to change. 
As such, the memories of individuals born in the middle of the twentieth century are important in 
that they offer a great deal of information about twentieth-century generations, offering access to 
voices that are not often heard in Canadian black history.

Lastly, this is not a narrative history. Due to the sporadic and inconsistent access to 
historically relevant evidence, not at all uncommon when exploring the day-to-day experiences 
of marginalized racial, social and economic groups, this study was informed by understandable 
limitations. In addition to the unpredictability of any oral history project, the primary research 
was exploratory from the outset and its outcomes were shaped by both the failure and success of 
data mining efforts. The chronology presented here is crude in its linearity, but the subjects and 
topics discussed herein follow instep with the evidence as it surfaced rather than follow along a 
strict narrative structure. As such, this history provides snap shots of detectable and verifiable 
black life in Chatham, informed by obtainable primary evidence. A close reading of census data 
provided rich and original observations that can certainly be used to further our understanding of 
and appreciation for black lives in Canada. Likewise, the focus on black membership in the 
Prince Hall Masonic Lodge was, for example, due to invited access to private papers and 
proceedings that would provide a point of entry into black organizational experiences in the late

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46 My father was not interviewed for this study. I simply used my paternal genealogy as an example.
19th and 20th centuries. Useful as a representation of institutional process and community building, the Masonic papers provided yet another glimpse into the black experience as real, calculated, and intellectually significant. Exploration into these subject areas was wholly dependent upon access and, taken together, determined the character of the snapshot presented herein.

Chapter Overview:

Chapter One, "They should be called the Coons, because they are from Coontown:"

Black History in Early Chatham," provides a brief history of the town of Chatham. A description of its founding, geography, and major industries is followed by a detailed history of blacks in Chatham before the "influx" of 1850.47 Evaluating the conspicuousness of blacks in early Chatham against their near complete omission from Chatham's local history, implies, at least in part, that the marginalization of black people was not only persistent but also integral to the town's own history and self-image. Chapter Two, "Black Middle-Class Tradition Crosses the 49th Parallel" uses Canadian census data to investigate the likely demographic composition of Chatham in the nineteenth century in an effort to contextualize the middle class American character of Chatham's black intelligentsia. The impact of these intellectual and collective origins is further explored in Chapter Three, "Masonry is not intended for the rabble:48 The Prince Hall

47 Despite certain scholars caution that the "influx" was not as substantial as once believed, the idea that the number of blacks entering Canada after the passing of the Fugitive Slave Act in 1850 is ubiquitous. See: Sara Z. Burke and Patrice Milewski, eds. Schooling in Transition: Readings in Canadian History of Education (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 226; Peggy Bristow, "Whatever You Raise in the Ground You Can Sell it in Chatham: Black Women in Buxton and Chatham, 1850-65," in We're Rooted Here and They Can't Pull Us Up: Essays in African Canadian Women's History, ed. Peggy Bristow et al. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 115; Adrienne Shadd, The Journey From Tollgate to Parkway: African Canadians in Hamilton (Toronto: Natural Heritage Book, 2010), 131.

Lodge in Chatham, Ontario." The annual proceedings from the Masonic Prince Hall Lodge provide an unprecedented glimpse into the meaning and representation of respectable and gendered blackness in small town Ontario. Chapter Four "The bad odour comes, I think, from what we do not see:"

Chatham's Black Population in the 'Post Exodus' Era," traces the twentieth century creation of racialized spaces in Chatham's East End and its impact on a community's ability and desire to preserve places of considerable historical significance. Chapter Five "They haven't got to call you a nigger if they treat you like a nigger:' Racism and the Black Experience in Chatham Ontario," presents the oral testimony of blacks living in Chatham in the twentieth century. These personal histories, observations, and recollections provide the context necessary to approach a more complete understanding of the historical legacy of Chatham's black experience(s).

49MOH Says Creek Problem Mentioned in His Reports Available for the Council," The Chatham Daily News, April 13, 1941, 7.
Chapter 1

"They should be called the Coons, because they are from Coontown:"
Black History in Early Chatham

First surveyed in 1795, the city of Chatham was originally intended as a military outpost. When Lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada John Graves Simcoe arrived in Chatham in 1793, he saw the military and naval potential for a settlement situated at the "The Forks” of the town’s main water artery, the Thames River, which provided western access to Lake St. Clair and the Great Lakes basin and eastern access to McGregor's Creek and London. Chatham had a slow, albeit early, start in what was then Upper Canada, although it expanded rapidly into the mid-nineteenth century. Given its location, it came as little surprise that it became a model nineteenth century agricultural and business centre. Early accounts of the city described it alternately as shabby and impressive; an early visitor remarked in 1858:

Despite its unpromising appearance, Chatham seems an active and stirring place. In the town there are three sawmills, two shingle mills, two potash factories, two sash and blind factories, four flour mills, four brickyards, several iron foundries, three or four wagon factories, three cabinet warehouses, three breweries and two distilleries.

This visitor likely saw either Clark’s Grist Mill, built by Thomas Clark around 1793, one of the earliest industries of its kind within the city of Chatham. In addition to the economic benefits that resulted from the ongoing military presence in the latter part of the 1830s, Chatham welcomed immigrants from the United States and British North America. The Thames River served as a mid-century thoroughfare that encouraged early growth, especially among the service

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Throughout its history, Chatham featured a number of impressive hotels and taverns, including Israel Evans’ Cross Keys Tavern in the 1830s at King and Sixth Street, the Royal Exchange (1840) on the corner of King and Fifth Street, the Rankin Hotel (1852), and the Garner Hotel in the 1870s. The Garner Hotel was, in its time, considered to be an impressive edifice with over 80 rooms. The William Pitt Hotel replaced the Garner Hotel in 1930 after a massive fire burned the latter down in 1929. The William Pitt Hotel boasted 140 rooms and employed a 40-person workforce, dwarfing its predecessor as a local giant in the hospitality industry. It also provided much needed main street retail space for the growing number of storefronts popping up over the interwar period.

Figure 1: "Garner House, King Street, Chatham, Ontario; later site of the William Pitt Hotel." Chatham–Kent Museum 1985.27.3.32.

Ibid., 5.
Ibid.
Other major industries established in early Chatham were shaped by the city’s specific needs, which stemmed from its geographical location and superior agricultural production. Flour mills, shipbuilding, tanneries, large lumber merchants, carriage plants, soap shops, saw mills, and ship-plank mills were established along King Street, Wellington Street, and Third Street, as access to the Thames River provided industrialists and merchants access to the centre of the city.

Groceries and commercial enterprises sprang up, congesting a downtown area that was already modest in size. This area was divided up into blocks, named for their owners and/or builders, which housed a variety of groceries, dry good stores, lawyers, doctors, and dentist offices, shoemakers, clothiers, and newspapers. European brothers William and Walter Eberts built the four-storied “Eberts Block,” at the corner of King and Fifth Streets, in the 1850s. The Eberts’ name would become synonymous with Chatham business and industry, as the nineteenth century progressed and as the brothers ultimately bought a good portion of Chatham’s downtown core. The James Charity Block, Murray Block and Boyd Block were black-owned blocks that housed commercial and professional businesses and did steady business over the course of the mid-to-late 1800s. Unfortunately, these black entrepreneurs were rarely if ever referenced within the literature concerning early construction, early business or early industry in Chatham.

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56 Ibid., 8-9.
Figure 2: Nathaniel Murray, circa 1868. Chatham-Kent Black Historical Society.

As Chatham’s service industries expanded, its population increased, and as it led the county in industrial production and output, its inhabitants began to demand municipal control from the province and wanted to limit the city’s responsibilities to the outlying county areas. In
1841, Chatham gained municipal status; by 1855 it received “town-status” and was ultimately declared a city by 1895. 57

Chatham’s development as a municipality occurred as speedily and eagerly as did its entry into commercial and industrial enterprises. The Chatham Police force started as the Chatham Vigilance Society for the Suppression of Felony in 1835. 58 By 1847 Chatham had formed its first firefighting brigade and by 1855, the newly incorporated town boasted a six-man police force. 59 In keeping with the town’s law and order mandate, the Kent County Court House and Jail were built in 1848. 60 Lastly, the municipal goals of its citizens were met when the city’s Town Hall was built in 1856. 61

The completion of the Great Western Railway in 1853 ushered in incredible opportunities for Chatham and the surrounding areas. It not only altered the speed with which goods and services could be transported, it also connected locals to a wider Canadian landscape by increasing the flow of information and physical egress to the outside world. The Great Western Railway also contributed to the increase in black emigrants to Chatham from the United States and connected blacks already in Chatham to a larger network of abolitionist, religious, industrial, commercial and educational professionals who were visiting and/or relocating to the Chatham area. It was readily accessible by water and rail, and was within reasonable distance from the United States border, which itself provided its own commercial, industrial and employment opportunities. Blacks, self-emancipated or free, likely chose Chatham for the very same reasons

57 Ibid., 15-19.
59 Rhodes, A Community on the Thames, 15, 19; Carriveau, Chatham Police Force, 2.
60 Rhodes, A Community on the Thames, 21.
61 Ibid., 15.
white emigrants did; it was a rapidly expanding town located at the centre of some of the best agriculture in the province.

Figure 3: "A scene on King Street in Chatham. Horses and carriages can be seen lining the street." Chatham-Kent Museum n695.
Blacks in Early Chatham:

The element of surprise, then, holds black Canada in tension with the nation's ceaseless outlawing of blackness; blackness is surprising because it should not be here, was not here before, was always here, is only momentarily here, was always over there (beyond Canada, for example). This means, then, that black people in Canada are also presumed surprises because they are "not here" and "here" simultaneously: they are, like blackness, unexpected, shocking, concealed in a landscape of systemic blacklessness; and, they exist in a landscape of blacklessness and have "astonishingly" rich lives, which contradict the essential black subject.62

In her discussion of Marie-Joseph Angelique, the female slave who set fire to Montreal in 1734, Katherine McKittrick conceptualizes black history and black space in Canada as a surprise that essentially "contradicts Canada."63 This is an extremely useful concept that suggests an analysis of black history in Chatham can simultaneously uncover the substance of that history while interrogating its absence. There is certainly a geographical and spatial property to black "presence" both within the city itself and within that city's selective tradition. By "seeing" and identifying blacks in Chatham prior to the historiographically salient post-1850s Fugitive Slave Law influx, I am locating this space as one of surprise while insisting that blacks in Chatham are (and were) "viable geographic subjects."64 These individuals helped build the city of Chatham, helped defend their country, and contributed to its early industry and material culture.

According to various scholars, blacks made up a third of Chatham's total population by the middle of the nineteenth century.65 In 1858, about six thousand people were believed to be

62 Katherine McKittrick, Demonic Grounds: Black Women and the Cartographies of Struggle (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 93.
63 McKittrick, Demonic Grounds, 92.
64 Ibid., 92.
living in Chatham, about one third being “negroes.” The “one-third black” consensus is consistent within the historical literature, regardless of date, as a visitor in 1870 also claimed a similar count of black bodies. While extolling the failures of blacks in Canada, Samuel Sullivan Cox, an American Congressman who was decidedly pro-slavery, claimed that “[a] few years since Chatham was a bright and prosperous village; but now more than a quarter of its population are negroes, and three-fourths of them are worthless idlers and petty thieves.” Negative characterization notwithstanding, one thing within the literature is certain: the population of blacks in Chatham, Ontario during the middle of the nineteenth century was substantial enough that it could not be ignored, avoided, or unacknowledged. The Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 is often credited for the increase in the number of blacks who settled in Ontario. Unfortunately, the city's historiography often failed to acknowledge the fact that a number of blacks, free and former slave, had made their way to Kent County earlier than the post-1850 influx.

The first known blacks to arrive in the Chatham area came as slaves owned by Sarah Ainse, an Oneida woman, who traded extensively in the Western District. According to a 1779 Detroit census, she had, among various other sundry items and two homes in Detroit; four slaves. Other sources claim she held “negro slaves”, confirming the race of the slaves, but leaving the number to question. These four unnamed slaves came to Chatham with Sarah Ainse, where they

67 Charles Marshall, *The Canadian Dominion* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1871), 100. “At the date of my visit, 1870, the numbers of the coloured population were regarded as stationary. The natural increase by births made up for the losses by removal. The black race was estimated at one-third the numbers of the white in Chatham, the principal place in the district, and in Buxton [sic]and Dresden, towns of very small proportions.”
69 Fred Landon, "The Negro Migration to Canada After the Passing of the Fugitive Slave Act," *The Journal of Negro History* 5, no. 1 (1920): 22, 26, 27; Sharon Roger Hepburn, "Following the North Star: Canada as a Haven for Nineteenth-Century American Blacks," *The Michigan Historical Review* 25, no. 2 (1999): 101-104, 112: "...many blacks emigrating to Canada were fleeing the Fugitive Slave Law, either directly or indirectly. If follows that the most significant explanation for relocation to Canada was the desire of blacks to be secure in their freedom."
cleared her land and helped run her farm. Ainse was both a land and slave holding Native woman who controlled a valuable trading business and early on purchased considerable tracts of land in Kent County. Though active throughout the district, Sarah Ainse moved to what would later become Dover Township in 1787 and in 1788 she “completed the purchase from local Indians of a 150-square-mile property which ran from the mouth of the [Thames] river up to the forks where the city of Chatham now stands.”\textsuperscript{71} Also absent from Chatham’s historical memory and excluded from its “founding fathers” narrative, Sarah Ainse ought to be recognized for helping to build up the area that would later become Chatham, as she proceeded to sell her land holdings to “merchants and to the loyalists who had grown tired of waiting for the Government to supply them with lands.”\textsuperscript{72} A 1790 survey of the Thames River and Chatham area counted twenty-eight homes in total, all log construction, some vacant, others inhabited by the earliest European male “settlers” in the area. This count would also include, among the other log homes, “[b]etween Sarah Ainse and a house belonging to Matthew Dolsen, which was much farther up,…a hut belonging to a negro, apparently one of Mrs. Ainse’s slaves.”\textsuperscript{73}

Other blacks were known to have settled in the area, although again their numbers were anything but stable and remain uncertain. Fred Hamill, in \textit{The Valley of the Lower Thames}, claimed that “negroes had been known on the Thames for several years before the purchase [of Chatham land]”, though he failed to provide sources to back up this claim. However, in a rare instance of naming, Hamill identified a man by the name of Edward Smith as having been the only "negro who received an assignment of land on the Thames as a loyalist" in the area after the American Revolution.\textsuperscript{74} Held as a prisoner by the Cherokee during the war, Edward Smith later

\textsuperscript{71} Clarke, "Ainse (Hands), Sarah," np.  
\textsuperscript{72} Fred Hamil, \textit{The Valley of the Lower Thames, 1640-1850} (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1951), 12.  
\textsuperscript{73} Hamil, \textit{The Valley of the Lower Thames}, 12-13.  
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid., 21-22.
worked for Colonel De Peyster, the man who secured his release.\textsuperscript{75} Hamill further claims that "[t]here were a number of other negroes on the Thames who worked as hired labourers", and that "[e]scaped slaves were already finding this region a haven."\textsuperscript{76}

Jonathan Walton, in his PhD dissertation "Blacks in Buxton and Chatham, Ontario, 1830-1890: Did the 49\textsuperscript{th} Parallel Make a Difference?" claimed that in Chatham "there were settlers, actually squatters, found in the area as early as 1791. Among these early settlers who numbered twenty families is listed one black household."\textsuperscript{77} Unofficially, "there were six blacks living in Raleigh Township; along with some blacks in the area who were slaves, some who had been freed after the American Revolution, and some who were fugitives."\textsuperscript{78} As suggested by Fred Hamill, "[t]he negro element in the population continued to increase steadily as escaped slaves arrived from the United States."\textsuperscript{79} The historical source used to make this general count are the Account Books of John Dolsen of Dover, which contained the names of four black men living in Chatham between 1817 and 1821: Tom Surphlet, George Askin, William Booker, and Israel Williams.\textsuperscript{80} We do not know for certain whether these men were bachelors or whether they had wives, since married women, black and white alike, did not often appear in these early histories. Assuming these men had families with them on arrival, or created families upon arrival, the number of black people in this early period might actually be slightly more than the four men who appear on Dolsen’s Account Book. We do know for certain, however, that there were black children living in Chatham, which strongly suggests the presence of women, if only as mothers of the growing number of black children in the area.

\textsuperscript{75} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid., 22.
\textsuperscript{77} Jonathan Walton, "Blacks in Buxton and Chatham, Ontario, 1830-1890: Did the 49\textsuperscript{th} Parallel Make a Difference?" (PhD diss, Princeton University, 1979), 20.
\textsuperscript{78} Walton, "Blacks in Buxton and Chatham, Ontario," 20.
\textsuperscript{79} Hamil, \textit{The Valley of the Lower Thames}, 17.
\textsuperscript{80} Hamil, \textit{The Valley of the Lower Thames}, 17.
On February 27, 1824, M. Burwell was granted an acre of land, “Lot 59” from the Crown, upon which a log building was erected for the specific purpose of providing a school for the black children living in Chatham proper. The school became necessary, in part, because the six children of the above named Israel Williams were “refused admission to Central Public School in town.” Two years after the land grant for what would later be known as the Princess Street School, an “English Farmer” by the name of Joseph Pickering made his way across the “British Province of Canada” in an effort to assess its value with an eye to emigration. In his diary, Pickering observed on September 10, 1826, while visiting land around Zone Township in and around the Chatham area that “Black slaves, who have run away from their masters in Kentucky, arrive in Canada almost weekly (where they are free), and work at raising tobacco.” Nine months later, on April 5, 1827, on another visit to Chatham, Pickering observed that “[a]t Chatham there is a church, and a mill, but no town or village at present….There are some rich farms along its banks, but it is not settled backward…Wheat grows and looks well, just covering the ground. There is a store, a mill, on in ten or fifteen miles.”

In Blacks in Canada, Robin Winks states that in 1827 “there were enough Negroes at Chatham to justify support from Dr. Bray’s Associates.” Dr. Thomas Bray (1656-1730) was an “English divine” who organized the Anglican Church in Maryland, created the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, and built libraries in England and the United States. “Dr. Bray’s humanitarianism, …also encompassed plans for the education not only of the unfortunate white

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82 Catherine Slaney, Family Secrets: Crossing the Colour Line (Toronto: Natural Heritage, 2003), 106.
83 Joseph Pickering, Emigration or No Emigration; Being the Narrative of the Author (An English Farmer) from the year 1824 to 1830; During Which Time he Traversed the United States of America, and the British Province of Canada, With a View to Settle as an Emigrant (London: S. Manning and Co. London-House Yard, St. Paul’s, 1830), 63.
84 Pickering, Emigration or No Emigration, 90.
people in England and its possessions but the Negroes who lived in the British plantations as well.”

After Dr. Bray’s death in 1731, his trustees were “confirmed by decree of chancery, under the name of “The Associates of the late Dr. Bray.”

In the mid-eighteenth century, the Associates continued Dr. Bray’s vision by building schools for blacks in Philadelphia, New York City, Williamsburg, Virginia, and Newport, Rhode Island. One source claimed that these schools educated between fifteen and thirty children at any given time, indicating the likely enrollments required to attract this type of colonial enterprise. That Dr. Bray’s Associates worked in Chatham, Ontario in 1827, suggests the conditions in Chatham were such that these missionary endeavors were necessary and justified. That Dr. Bray's Associates came to Chatham implies that not only was the number of black children adequate enough to warrant intervention, but also that there was enough known about the village that the Associates were aware of the status of blacks living there in the first place.

Let us imagine Chatham between 1790-1830 in its infancy as a village and at the very beginning stages of its settlement. It is evident that blacks lived in Chatham at this time, that they were conspicuous enough to merit record in travellers’ accounts, that in some cases information about their origins and reasons for emigration were elucidated, and that they had children enough to justify the construction of a proper school for their instruction. These observations are of some significance when considering black participation in the early settlement of Chatham. It is highly likely, then, that blacks participated in the building of Chatham’s businesses, homes, churches, roads, and overall infrastructure.

89 Ibid., 283, 285-286.
90 Ibid., 285.
In 1832, “[s]even negro families were living as squatters in the growing village of Chatham.”91 A report by the deputy surveyor, whose job was “to make a report on the lands occupied in the town of Chatham,” 92 counted among the inhabitants of Chatham, “the negro family of Israel Williams, who had been in the neighbourhood for some years”, living in a log house that “was purchased by a former squatter. Williams had built a slaughter-house and was supplying the other residents with fresh meat.” 93 The survey reported that

The banks of the creek above were occupied by negro families, with the exception of George Merriam, Sr., and his sons George and Salem,…Their coloured neighbours, on both sides of them, were John Douglas, Charles Bakewell, James Stump, and George Straws. On the northeast bank of the creek were two negroes, John Robinson and a blacksmith named George St. Denis;…94

Patrick Shirreff, another British visitor to the Chatham area, left Mungoswells, Scotland on April 20, 1833 and published his travelogue, *A Tour Through North America*, in 1835. He claimed that he had encountered people of colour in Chatham; several of them helped him over the course of his travels. While looking for horses for his expedition along the river Thames, Shirreff “observed two men of colour crossing the river in a canoe, and leading a horse, which was swimming.”95 Mr. Shirreff introduced himself to these men and found that they were brothers also from Kentucky who “both farmed on lease, one of them renting 190 acres on the banks of the river, fifty of which were cleared, for $20 per annum.”96 Likely out of simple curiosity, Mr. Shirreff asked whether the brothers were runaways, to which one replied

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91 Hamil, *The Valley of the Lower Thames*, 118.
92 Ibid., 143.
93 Ibid., 145.
94 Ibid.
in the affirmative, and replied, laughingly, I suppose you have also run away. A great many people of colour are settled in the Western parts of Upper Canada, almost all of whom are runaway slaves from the United States.97

Mr. Shirreff, finding himself in need of transportation, hired the assistance of none other than the aforementioned Israel Williams, “a man of colour, who owned an excellent farm in the vicinity of Chatham, to carry us with a waggon [sic] and pair of horses south to Lake Erie, and round the lake and Detroit river to Sandwich.”98 Shirreff describes Israel Williams as “a runaway negro from the State of Virginia, a smart, active, stout little fellow, in good circumstances, having several stacks of wheat, and six or seven horses, of different ages.”99 Shirreff went on to discuss Mr. Williams' wife, Juliana, “who was as stout and glossy black as any negro could desire,” and his “five or six fine curly-haired children.”100

Shirreff’s description of Chatham in the 1830s is helpful in ascertaining the state of its settlement and potential for rapid growth. He claimed that a year prior to his visit, the village “was said to contain only five or six houses” and that upon his most recent visit “there are nearly twenty.”101 He credited its location on the Thames and the steady steamboat traffic for its then present and future growth.102 Similarly, though slightly later in 1839, Hugh Murray, in his treatise An Historical and Descriptive Account of British America, likewise affirms that circa 1832, “Chatham in a twelvemonth had increased from five or six to nearly twenty houses; and there is every likelihood of its continuing to prosper, as steam-vessels can ascend to it.”103

97 Ibid.
98 Ibid., 195.
99 Ibid., 202.
100 Ibid.
101 Ibid., 194.
102 Ibid.
103 Hugh Murray, An Historical and Descriptive Account of British America; Comprehending Canada Upper and Lower, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island, the Bermudas, and the Fur Countries, Volume 1 (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, Tweeddale Court, 1839), 328.
In the 1830s, then, Chatham was a village with considerable opportunities for growth. Its location on the Thames opened it up to travellers from the United States. Is it at all unlikely that some of those travellers were black, given what we know of the use of waterways in what would later be called the Underground Railroad? And whether it had five or six or twenty homes, given the fact that British travellers surveying the area for relocation came into steady contact with black people in this early period, we might be able to deduce that at a number of those homes would have likely been inhabited by black families. If, in 1835, there were two black brothers farming 190 acres on the banks of the Thames, they likely represented at least one of those homes. Similarly, Israel and Juliana Williams had “five or six” children and “six or seven horses” and owned a farm described as “excellent.”

If it is true that “Chatham’s rapid growth was from 1832 through 1835” reaching a total population of 600 by 1840, the data above should convince even the most stubborn skeptic that blacks would have made up a measurable and recognizable proportion of that total number. The four enumerated families listed between 1817 and 1821, the seven families enumerated in 1832, the building of a school in 1824 to accommodate black children, the arrival of Dr. Bray’s Associates in Chatham on missionary business, and the travel encounters of British travellers proves the presence of blacks in Chatham in the pre-1850 era. Moreover, blacks were arriving in the Chatham area on a weekly basis, and black populations in surrounding areas such as Sandwich, Raleigh, Amherstburg, and Wilberforce were increasing steadily (though perhaps not rapidly). In all likelihood the newly-arrived blacks in the district and nearby counties would have encountered each other and some basic material improvements would have followed from their settlement in the form of “waggons”, homes, shops, farms, schools, and churches. Therefore black people played some significant role in the actual building of the town of Chatham.

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104 Hamil, *The Valley of the Lower Thames*, 149.
As important as it is to inquire into the presence and contribution of blacks in early Chatham, it is also important to approach some understanding of what their lived experience might have been like. Again, in the absence of personal testimonies, in the case of Chatham one must turn to a close reading of visitors’ data. Of some historiographical significance is the fact that few if any sources come from Chatham residents, black or white, but rather from outsiders who took an interest in the area. European travelogues provide rich detail about the county in general and contribute significantly to an understanding of early black settlement in the area. In some cases, these travelogues, whose very purpose was to catalogue and detail the flora and fauna, industry, and population of any given area, also provide lost genealogical data by actually naming the black individuals they met over the course of their travels. Given that these descriptive narratives are essentially brochures advertising the virtues of Ontario to prospective European settlers and intimating the province’s exciting and lucrative settlement potential, it is interesting that they provide so much information about the local black presence.

Another important source of information regarding early black settlement is the black diasporic reporting conducted in the early nineteenth-century as part of the abolitionist adventure. These reports about blacks in Canada were written by blacks either living in or travelling to Canada, and ought to be carefully interpreted as representing a particular subjectivity. Early tracts, American and Canadian, written by whites to dissuade continued black immigration to the country and to counter abolitionists' claim that blacks could “survive” freedom, should also be considered with caution, given the negative opinion that the “not altogether desirable portion of our population” could thrive in Canada. The experiences of early blacks in Canada unfolded as a performance of sorts, in that there were thousands of eyes trained to the Canadian black

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experiment, which could at once foil abolitionist hopes or extinguish the guile of the pro-slavery factions north and south of the border. How likely is it that every black person in nineteenth-century Ontario knew they were participating in this great a spectacle, perhaps themselves fearful of the outcome? These early sources, regardless of their varying perspectives and ulterior designs, fill very significant voids in the historical record, provide important historical information about early blacks in Chatham at best, and at the very least, they offer some sense of context for the world these individuals entered into and endured.

In 1843, William P. Newman, a black reverend writing for the religious and pro-abolitionist paper *The Oberlin Evangelist*, reported the difficulty blacks faced in Canada regarding their efforts to educate their children. Newman travelled to black settlements for a living and “was responsible for obtaining teachers” for various black communities in the United States. While in Canada, he provided his readers examples of prejudice and exclusion of black children from schools in Brandford and Chatham. Despite the enthusiasm he found among blacks in Canada to find some way to educate their children, black parents found it near impossible to combat the racist exclusion of their children from school. Finding the provision of black teachers wanting, they faced a near insurmountable obstacle. Newman himself was invited to teach in St. Catharines and Colchester. He stated that during his tour of Canada West,

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in every place I visited where they had no school, I found them very anxious to have one, and at some places, while I was speaking to them on the subject of education, and trying to show them the importance of it, &c., they broke out, “Hear, Hear, let us have a teacher, a teacher, and we will do what we can to support him.”

According to Newman, the government schools were “so pregnant with prejudice, that the colored children are almost suffocated, as soon as they enter; hence, parents do not send their children to such schools, and if they did they could not go.”

It is clear that blacks were willing to hire and independently pay teachers to teach their children rather than accept exclusion from the government schools, however even that enterprise was a frustrated one. In Brantford, the black children were kept out of the provincial schools and the parents, having been told that they “could not and should not come to their schools,” refused to pay school taxes. This form of protest was quieted as the black parents were then “compelled to [pay their taxes] by law.” Newman’s next example illustrates the insult and frustration parents must have faced in attempting to educate their children, by recounting the complaint of a Mr. James Stumps of Chatham. James Stumps, “one of the most respectable colored citizens of that place, and an elder in the Church,” was told by a white teacher to bring his children to their Sabbath school. Fearing the effects of prejudice on his children, Mr. Stumps initially opted out of the seemingly generous offer, but after being urged several times, by the same gentleman, he concluded to send them. So on the next Sabbath he took, well dressed, his three little daughters and son (who are bright mulattoes) to the Sabbath school, and on going in, the bench which the white children put their feet on, was given him and his children to sit upon. He turned and left the school with his children.

In 1844, William P. Newman offered his readers another fine example of prejudice

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110 Ibid.
111 Ibid.
112 Ibid.
113 Ibid.
114 Ibid.
Chatham blacks experienced in this early period. At this time, according to Newman, the black experience in Canada was little better than that in the United States, a fact that he believed would “not be unpleasant to those who have driven the colored people from their homes and friends, by their tyranny and oppression.”¹¹⁵ Newman challenged the common refrain and general defense of emigration to Canada that “Her Majesty’s law makes no distinction…[that] privileges are not bounded by color, and that he who has curly hair, is not converted into a thing,” by reporting the negative experiences he encountered during his travels, claiming that the “colored people can scarcely walk the streets, in very many parts of Canada, without being insulted and abused by those having a fairer skin than themselves.”¹¹⁶ And though he admits that the potential existed to “punish…oppressors” by making use of Her Majesty’s colour-blind laws, and that blacks in Canada availed themselves of these laws, they “have always failed, in consequence of prejudiced judges, &c.”¹¹⁷ Of extreme significance, especially in light of this earlier period, is Newman’s detailed description of the colour prejudice that existed on the steamboats so often lauded by local historians and then-contemporary observers of Chatham’s fantastic growth. He claims that in no way were blacks permitted inside the cabins of the Thames River steamboats, “on any cditions [sic] whatever.”¹¹⁸ Newman submits to his readers the unfortunate story of a Mrs. Jackson from Chatham, Ontario, “a lady of intelligence and piety” who was travelling from Chatham to Detroit:

She took passage on the steamer Brothers, (Capt. Walter Eberts,) which plies between these places. The weather being cold and stormy, and her health very poor, she went into the cabin, and the captain came in immediately, and drove her out, and she had to sit on deck, in cold winds, heavy rains, and dashing waves, from seven o’clock in the morning, till late at night. She took cold, and in a few days, was no more.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ Ibid.
¹¹⁸ Ibid.
¹¹⁹ Ibid.
Not without a flare for drama, Newman told his readers that Mrs. Jackson’s “physicians say…prejudice was the cause of her death.”\textsuperscript{120} So virulent was the racism aboard Capt. Eberts’ ship that Newman claimed that his “passengers refused to eat with Rev. Hiram Wilson, because he was a \textit{missionary among the colored people}.\textsuperscript{121} Apparently the taint of sympathy for the slave was too much for white locals and visitors alike. In addition to having to “give up their seats at any time, in a stage, to a white person” and being “made to get out and ride on top, if a white person says he does not wish to ride with a ‘nigger,’” blacks in Chatham also had to endure racial hatred from the likes of a Methodist minister.\textsuperscript{122} According to Newman, a “genteel colored young man” who had approached the altar at a Methodist church after a “minister gave invitation…to come to the altar for prayer”, was snatched up by the collar and led off by the minister himself.\textsuperscript{123} That very same minister, who is unfortunately not named, ended up at the Methodist Church in Chatham where

Mrs. Lane, a lady who taught school for some years at Dayton, Ohio, an intelligent woman of color, and Mrs. Hill of Cincinnati, went to his church to meeting, and on entering, for not taking the “negro pew,” the minister called them “negro wenches.”\textsuperscript{124}

William Newman’s written reports are significant because they establish the nature of racism that blacks faced in Chatham prior to 1850. This was not the polite racism Canada is often praised for. From schools, to steamboats, to churches, segregation was the rule and was as broadly applied as in any southern state, though perhaps not as violently. It is often posited that white racism became more pronounced as the population of blacks increased in the province.\textsuperscript{125}

\textsuperscript{120} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{121} Ibid. Emphasis in original.
\textsuperscript{122} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{123} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{124} Ibid.
As Barrington Walker argues in *Race On Trial: Black Defendants in Ontario's Criminal Courts, 1858-1958*:

Over time, Blacks began to realize that they were in the midst of a White settler colony and an outpost of the British empire which grew increasingly hostile to them. *As more Black arrived in Ontario, the attitude of the host society began to sour.* Much to the chagrin of White Ontarioans, however, many of these 'unwelcomed guests' became permanent settlers. As a consequence, residential segregation became a fact of Black life in Ontario.\(^{126}\)

It appears, however, that *any* black presence was sufficient to give rise to racist exclusion, which resulted in general disenfranchisement and would ultimately frustrate the earliest “Canadian experiment” experiences of blacks’ search for freedom on British soil.

**Military Presence:**

Largely overlooked within Chatham's local historiography is the pre-1850 black participation in the military. Black participation in the local militias is impossible to ignore or dismiss, if only for the apparently memorable impact it had on Chatham’s white population. In 1793, the “Kent Militia was formed…under the Militia Act of that year,” and at this time only “37 whites and two negroes were enrolled”; however, a total of six blacks out of 104 men were available to fight.\(^{127}\) Also absent from Chatham's historiography is black participation in the Rebellions of 1837, which also corresponds to the early black presence in Chatham. What seems particularly egregious about this historiographical erasure is the fact that it requires a full

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\(^{126}\) Barrington Walker, *Race on Trial: Black Defendants in Ontario's Criminal Courts, 1858-1958* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 34-35. See also: Winks, *The Blacks in Canada*, 234, 403: "That the Negro population did increase precipitously in the southwestern part of the province is also clear, a condition that helps to explain the rapidly rising anti-Negro sentiment in that portion of Canada West…" And: Ralph E. Weber, "Riot in Victoria, 1860," *The Journal of Negro History* 56, no. 2 (1971): 141.

\(^{127}\) Hamil, *The Valley of the Lower Thames*, 78
omission of data. Blacks in Chatham created their own militia from 1837 to 1843.\textsuperscript{128} Five companies of black men were formed and authorized, and remained in uniform even after the conflict. Estimates of a regular militia company vary between 80-225 and 130-150 men. In light of the fact that "none reached full strength," even lower estimates of 20-50 men per company would place at least 100 to 250 black men in Chatham proper in this pre-1850 period.\textsuperscript{129}

Understandably keen to fight for the British against the United States within a post-British-Emancipation context,

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\text{[t]he coloured population…was greatly excited by the rebellion and the ensuing raids on the frontiers. Not at first permitted to serve in the militia, they formed a drill company of their own, and practiced with arms borrowed from the regulars. Colonel Chichester finally received permission to enlist this company in the fall of 1838, but he found difficulty in obtaining white officers for it.}\textsuperscript{130}
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Aside from the reluctance on the part of white officers, there were apparently other factors keeping black men from participating. According to Fred Coyne Hamil, author of \textit{The Valley of the Lower Thames, 1640 to 1850}, military participation was materially impractical for a segment of the black underclass because “most of the negroes were poor, married men, who were unwilling to engage for as long a period as six months.” Interestingly, this statement alludes to the marital status of black men, suggesting the presence of women and the presence of black families that were important enough to impede black male military service. This statement also indicates that blacks were being called upon to fight, and were at times eager to do so, though perhaps they ultimately were unwilling to sacrifice too much to participate in military conflict.\textsuperscript{131}

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{} Kerr-Ritchie, "Rehearsal for War," 10.
\bibitem{} Fred Coyne Hamil, \textit{The Valley of the Lower Thames:1640-1850} (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1951), 232.
\bibitem{} This reluctance to serve was not at all uncommon in early Upper Canada. George Sheppard's \textit{Plunder, Profit, and Paroles: A Social History of the War of 1812 in Upper Canada} (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994),
\end{thebibliography}
We know very little about specific instances of individual black male participation in the military in this early period of Chatham’s history. Nevertheless, while the documentary evidence regarding the military often fails to reflect the black experience, it provides a resource historians of black history are well accustomed to: using white reactions to “The Black Presence” in order to write black history. In the absence of a black voice within the primary documentation, approaching the black experience through white responses to black people is simultaneously limiting, illuminating, and troubling. A balanced reading of available sources is as important as it is challenging given the fact that the perspectives of whites reflected their racist and nativist views. According to some of the white reactions to blacks in early Chatham, especially within a military context, one would be led to believe that there was, at any given time, a ratio of 50 blacks to every white person. The racial and class panic in the statements that follow are helpful in that they attest to blacks actually living in Chatham in the pre-1850 era, and hint at what living as a black man in Chatham might have been like at the time. It is important to recognize, however, that the reactions were likely not at all proportional to the threat or actual existence of a “black influx.”

In a travel novel entitled Life in the West: Back-wood Leaves and Prairie Flowers; Rough Sketches on the Borders of the Picturesque, the Sublime, and Ridiculous, written in 1841 and published in 1842, Morleigh, the author, travelled to Chatham and experienced the white reception and perception of blacks in the city. While aboard the steamship, Morleigh read the local paper and its rave review of the vessel, which caused him to “look about for the ‘taste and elegance displayed in her fittings up,’ which certainly had escaped [his] notice” causing him to complain that “[n]ever in my life have I suffered more severely from the jolting, tossing, rolling,

40-67, details frequent instances of insubordination and desertion as well as blatant refusal to serve in the militia in favour of remaining at home to farm.
and heaving…during the six hours thus wretchedly spent crossing the Lake of St. Clair.”

He had the particular misfortune of having to be served by “a dirty, curly-haired negro boy, assisted by a greasy yellow man” who were “both sleepy, cross, and lazy.” The black boy’s “blubber lips”, the fare and the manner with which it was served spoiled Morleigh’s appetite and clearly revealed that he was not a sympathetic observer when it came to his encounters with “others.”

However, in a chapter segment entitled “The black regiment”, Morleigh described the “black regiment on drill” on the “West End of Chatham”, as being made up of “all run-away slaves" (barring the officers) who he thought

look[ed] fierce and pompous enough; I dare say they would fight like devils with the Yankees, rather than submit to go back to the plantation again; same time, I think the Canadas safe enough without a guard of darkees, and [he] was happy to hear they would soon be disbanded.

To be fair, Morleigh also thought that Chatham’s general populace appeared “poor, indolent, and wretched-looking,” so one supposes him a man difficult to please or impress, one not without a powerful love of his own opinion.

While sitting at a bar a day or so into his visit, Morleigh witnessed a conversation concerning the “awful number of blacks gathered into Chatham”:

'It amounts to a grievance,' said one. 'It amounts to a nuisance,' said another. 'Why, man, the darkees carry all before them,' said a third; 'and those runaway niggers may be our masters before long.' 'The black regiment emboldens them so,' said a swarthy little smith. 'Like to see them keep a wall side in the States, as they do here,' said an American.

A member of the group recounted a harrowing experience when he had to face down “three of the black sodgers”

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133 Ibid., 194.
134 Ibid., 194-195
135 Ibid., 198.
136 Ibid.
137 Ibid., 203-204.
138 Ibid., 204.
—they swore awful at me, I tell you; and more than that, for though I reeled back from the planks to let them pass, one of them gives me a cut across the ----with his rattan."\textsuperscript{139}

This story was met with a “burst of indignation” from the crowd of men at the exact moment a black man entered the bar, “spicily dressed in black”, to ask about putting up posters in the bar for a “public dinner the coloured folks mean to give.”\textsuperscript{140} The black man’s request was met with a negative response and applause that confirmed the bar crowd’s approval:

'I would not permit my wall to be defaced by your blackguard placards.' 'Brayvo!' cried painter Waft—'Well said, I say;' and the rest raised their voices, while the poor black slunk out, abashed. 'Eating and drinking, wooing and fiddling, and preaching, all the summer,' said our host; 'that’s the way with the darkees; and starving and perishing all winter.' 'Hang me, if I subscribe one farthing for firewood for the blacks next winter!' said the smith, sourly.”\textsuperscript{141}

At that point in the evening, “three tall black soldiers” with unenviable timing happened to walk into the building and up to the bar. They asked to be served drinks, a request that was met with a negative response from the host and more cheerful shouts of “Brayvo, brayvo” from the other patrons, causing the “discomfited darkees [to retreat], muttering oaths deep and loud.”\textsuperscript{142} The men in the bar then toasted this very embarrassing and very public display of racial exclusion.

It would seem that in the early part of the 1840s, the whites in Chatham quite literally believed they were “being inundated with a black menace.”\textsuperscript{143} This perception was understandably, though not inexcusably, deepened by the not uncommon fear of “quasi-trained armed black men” living within such close proximity, exhibiting a tempered deference, their “haughtiness” on full display.\textsuperscript{144} Since the American Revolutionary War, the fear of arming blacks for military purposes had been a prevalent concern on the part of military leadership and

\textsuperscript{139} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{140} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{141} Ibid., 204-205.
\textsuperscript{142} Ibid., 205.
\textsuperscript{143} Walton, "Blacks in Buxton and Chatham, Ontario," 22; Hamil, The Valley of the Lower Thames, 288-289.
\textsuperscript{144} Walton, "Blacks in Buxton and Chatham, Ontario," 22.
public opinion. In fact, given that by the "mid-17th century, all colonies excluded blacks out of fear that arming and training them might lead to unrest and even revolt," there should be no surprise that these disinclinations continued and intensified into the nineteenth century.145 Whites' initial fear of armed slave insurrections would later evolve into fear black autonomy, capacity for self-defense, or challenges to the racialized social order.146

In the summer of 1842, the Emancipation Day celebration was “held at the militia parade grounds at Chatham, Kent County…[r]esidents at dawn were awakened by a 21-gun salute. A company of 100 soldiers paraded through the town.”147 This display of might, pride, and loyalty to the Crown was reinforced by the keynote address delivered by Josiah Jones, a Tennessee-born farmer who had relocated to Chatham and militia member, who expressed his unwavering support and gratitude for the British government’s commitment to freedom.148 This celebration included “a dinner ‘beneath an arbor of boughs sixty feet long’, and “an evening dance at the military barracks.”149 It is important to note that such a celebration would not have gone unnoticed, since the barracks were situated at the square centre of the town, making this a very public and visible demonstration of blackness in the city of Chatham. Might such displays of unapologetic blackness mingling with expressions of civic and commonwealth pride and sense of duty encourage the growing panic and apprehension growing among the most vocal of white Chathamites?

148 Ibid., 21.
149 Ibid.
Despite the fact that whites in Chatham perceived an unhealthy increase in the number of blacks on their doorsteps, sources conflict on the early estimates. Jeffery Kerr-Ritchie, claims that the 1842 Emancipation Day parade was made up of 100 soldiers. John K.A. Farrell, who wrote the oft-cited unpublished PhD dissertation entitled “The History of the Negro Community in Chatham, Ontario, 1787-1865,” claimed that, based on the participation of blacks during the 1841 Emancipation Day parade, the “total black population in Chatham was probably less than two hundred people.”\(^{150}\) This would imply that there were 100 black men in the parade, and fewer than 100 black people participating in the overall celebration. Natasha Henry, in her book entitled *Emancipation Day: Celebrating Freedom in Canada*, claims that “[m]en of African descent in Chatham coordinated two voluntary militias of eighty men in 1838” to assist in the Rebellions of 1837.\(^{151}\) She does not cite where the count of eighty comes from, and it is unclear whether she was describing two groups of 80 men (which would equal 160 total), or two groups of men combined to make a total of 80. If she means 160 men, we could safely assume that the “less than 200” population count in 1841 is probably quite modest if one were to account for wives and children for a fair number of the men. One would also have to assume that not every black man in Chatham was in the militia. If Chatham’s total population was just over 1,000 in 1843, and we estimate that between 200 and 300 blacks lived in Chatham in the 1840s, they hardly made up a majority. And yet their conspicuousness in the small village, taken together with racist views held by segments of the city’s white population, made them an easy target to blame for everything from falling land values, to theft, to fear of civic disorder.\(^{152}\) When the

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\(^{150}\) Walton, "Blacks in Buxton and Chatham, Ontario," 22.


\(^{152}\) Walton, "Blacks in Buxton and Chatham, Ontario," 22.
black militia was officially disbanded in 1843, it proved a relief to Chatham’s fretful white population.\footnote{153}

These men would have lived, shopped, ate, and entertained themselves in the city. Though many may have lived in barracks near the armories, it is also plausible that they courted women, built homes and families, or perhaps boarded or lived in surrogate households. What is unclear within the early history of Chatham is who these men were. Black companies were voluntary and were not always recognized or granted official status so muster rolls and other traditional sources of military data were either never created or did not survive. Despite the lack of individual testimony, it is possible to assume that upon the dissolution of the militia, some of the men, who had likely been in the city for the majority of the eight years they served, remained in the city to pursue the same industrial and commercial opportunities that attracted people, white and black, to the area over the same period of time.

Given the presence of blacks in Chatham from its inception, one might expect to see their individual contributions to its early settlement reflected within the local historiography. However, as this next section will show, it is clear that an adherence to a selective tradition was particularly stubborn.

**Black Marginalization Within Chatham's Local Historiography:**

Blacks do not fair prominently, if at all, within the Chatham's local historiography. Included so long as it proved edifying from the city's perspective, the history of black people in Chatham was often constructed as peripheral, as disruptive, as novelty; as a vagrant and often unwelcomed interruption within the "real" historiography. Early publications such as Chatham's

\footnote{153}Ibid.
Kent Historical Society's *Papers and Addresses* placed blacks well on the margins of any village narrative. Formally launched in 1912, the Kent Historical Society's constitution described that its organizational mandate was:

[to engage in the collection preservation, exhibition and publication of materials for the study of History, especially the History of the County of Kent to this end studying the archaeology of the county, acquiring documents and manuscripts, obtaining narratives and records of pioneers,…maintaining a gallery of Historical portraiture, publishing and otherwise diffusing information relative to the History of this county and of the Dominion,…encouraging and developing within the county the study of History.\(^{154}\)

The first seven volumes of the Kent Historical Society's Papers and Addresses (1914-1917, 1921, 1924, and 1951) included topics such as the history of professions in Chatham, pioneer life, and the histories of the area's social infrastructure such as schools, churches, businesses, and the local military presence. The first and most representative article, written by T.K. Holmes, doctor and first president of the Kent Historical Society, “Pioneer Life in Kent County,” offered an amalgamation of personal history passed down by family members, a second-hand physical description of Tecumseh and a description of the white pioneer experience peppered with imperialist language. The personal information he included framed his historical research and informed his claim to pioneer status in Kent County, given that, as far as originating pioneers go, his father was “the first white child born in Kent.”\(^{155}\)

Of the four chapters included the inaugural edition, there is no mention of black people in Kent County. Specifically, this volume focused on “The Birth of Chatham”, the failure of the Scottish Baldoon Settlement, the “Old Log Schoolhouse” (an article that is based completely on conjecture on “what it must have been like”) and the history of the Roman Catholic Church in the area. The focus was primarily on commemorating early white pioneers, and although the


society members took some time to celebrate Tecumseh, “the last great man of a decaying race,” they were more inclined to highlight the value of "white conquest, superiority, hard work, and achievement" that was completely in keeping with nineteenth century Anglo narrative constructions of European preeminence.156

Similarly, the second volume, published in 1915, maintains the consistency in its construction of the “uncivilized native” and the lawless "disorder" of the Coureurs du Bois who wed them.157 However, it also introduced the topic of blacks in and around Kent County. In her article, “Our Storied Past,” Katherine Coutts mentioned that John Brown, the man responsible for the 1859 raid on Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, “held a meeting at Chatham to revise the Constitution of the United States in the interests of the black men,” and who was “probably” influenced to come to Chatham due to the knowledge of “the nearby Buxton settlement formed in 1848 by Rev. Wm King with his own fifteen slaves as its nucleus.”158 Coutts' suggestion that Brown came to Kent County because of the Buxton settlement is curious because she assumed that Chatham was insufficiently significant to attract Brown and his supporters. While there is no doubt that Brown knew about Buxton, his arrival in Chatham was influenced by a class of blacks who had called Chatham home for some time. This second volume also introduces a trend that emerges in several of the other sources discussed herein. While the presence of blacks in Kent County is anything but elaborated upon in this particular volume, the author is careful to celebrate that “Kent has an honorable record in the stirring ante-bellum days of the Abolitionist struggle. Of twenty-five terminal stations of the Underground Railway in Canada, seven were in

Kent or Essex.”159 These assertions guaranteed Kent County's place within a liberal, progressive, benevolent, and noble society, while also marginalizing the recipients of said benevolence.

J.R. Gemmill’s article “Historical Sketch of the Press in Chatham,” continued to highlight Canada as the Promised Land for American blacks. Gemmill makes the first reference to the 1841 Emancipation Day celebrations in Chatham, which he claimed had been “described as a very credible one [sic], evidencing thrift on the part of the colored people who so lately escaped from bondage to this land of light.” Gemmill also made the second reference to the Underground Railroad, claiming “early in the [18]50’s the colored people began to escape to Canada in increasing number and this district being so close to the land of bondage, Chatham became the headquarters and the terminus of the ‘underground railway.’”161 A representative if somewhat flagrant omission appears in Gemill's treatment of the press in Chatham. Though he states that the Shadd family, "the brightest of the many estimable colored families that came to Kent in the early days," started the Provincial Freeman newspapers, Gemmill unfortunately and inaccurately credits Isaac Doras Shadd as having created the Provincial Freeman in 1854.162 I.D. Shadd did work as editor and bookkeeper for the Provincial Freeman; however, it was under the “driving force” of his older sister, Mary Ann Shadd, the “editorial voice” of the Freeman, that the paper was created in 1853.163 Mary Ann Shadd, the first female newspaper editor in Canada, does not warrant a single mention in Gemmill’s treatment of the Provincial Freeman and nowhere does she appear in the history of the press in Chatham. While Gemmill acknowledges the Provincial Freeman in this early historical publication, the dismissal of Mary

159 Ibid., 10.
162 Ibid., 37.
163 Gwendolyn Robinson and John W. Robinson, Seek the Truth: A Story of Chatham’s Black Community (Chatham: Self-Published, 1989), 106.
Ann Shadd is certainly more than an oversight; she was a prominent voice and a well-known personality in southwestern Ontario and anything but an insignificant player in the publishing of this paper. Given that Gemmill was the owner and editor of the "Chatham Banner," a newspaper that began in 1865 and became one of Chatham's more substantial nineteenth century newspapers, he would have well been aware of Mary Ann Shadd's presence and contribution to the *Freeman*.  

These omissions continue throughout Chatham's early historiography. The six black doctors listed in the 1861 business census, or the three black doctors listed in the 1881 business censuses also escape mention in an article discussing the history of Chatham's medical profession. Volumes Five (1921) and Six (1924) of the *Papers and Addresses* fail to mention blacks in any capacity at all. Volume Seven (1951) had two chapters about the Presbyterian Churches in Chatham and Dresden, but failed to consider any one of the seven black churches in Chatham and surrounding towns and township. The histories within the Kent Historical Society Papers tended to place blacks at the periphery of Chatham's settler narrative. By constructing blacks as socially unviable, absent or as an indistinguishable racialized group that could be used to either underscore whites' civilizing effect or utopic vision of Chatham as a "land of light," these authors carefully established an historical groundwork that subsequent residents could reference to reinforce their local identities and historical consciousness(es).

Later publications follow suit with few exceptions. As previously mentioned, Victor Lauriston's *Romantic Kent* highlights a few caricatures, informs his reader that Dresden, Ontario used to be known as "Nigger Hole," examines the history of Josiah Henson, the "Original Uncle Tom," and one time "four-year old pickaninny toddling about a Maryland plantation," and

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164 William H. Cooper, "Western Planet, Chatham Planet, Chatham Banner, History of Chatham Newspapers in Microfilm," Reel #437, July 2, 1859-September 29 1860, 3.  
165 Robinson, *Seek the Truth*, 130.
provides his reader this rather symbolically evocative passage about the immigration of blacks to the Chatham area:

a picturesque feature of Upper Canada life in the first half of the nineteenth century was the influx of colored people spirited across the line by that mysterious organization, the “underground railroad.”

More recent works on Chatham’s history have even less to say about blacks in Canada. John Rhodes, local historian and author of Centennial Chatham: One Hundred Years of the Maple City, When Chatham was Woods, A Community on the Thames: A Pictorial History of Chatham’s Business and Industry and Come Walking and Leave Early: A Pictorial History of the Chatham, Wallaceburg, and Lake Erie Electric Railway Co., depict Chatham as entirely and unquestionably white. Displayed in the general reference area, and locked behind glass in the central Chatham-Kent Public Library's “Local History Room,” these histories would be and likely remain the first sought out and referenced by any individual looking for historical information about Chatham. Rhodes does not mention black people in Chatham in the three hundred and forty seven pages of Rhodes' Centennial Chatham: One Hundred Years of the Maple City. Though he set out to “record the highlights of the one hundred years which have followed the incorporation of Chatham as a city…the noteworthy events which transpired and those who were instrumental in the process,” he completely omitted the black presence and the contribution of individual blacks living in the city. However, Rhodes quotes a St. Thomas, Ontario newspaper commentary about the local Chatham baseball team, “The Babes,” who apparently “should [have been] called the Coons…because they are from Coontown.” Blacks in Chatham also evade mention in Rhodes' A Community on the Thames which itself remains

166 Lauriston, Romantic Kent, 444. Emphasis added.
167 Rhodes, Centennial Chatham: One Hundred Years of the Maple City (Chatham: Rhodes Specialty Advertising, 1993), NP.
168 Rhodes, Centennial Chatham, 18.
quite unsurpassed within Chatham's local historiography. No mere picture book, this one hundred and fifty-three page history is a remarkable register of the construction of a medium-sized, industrially competent, and impressively rich southwestern Ontario city. Again, the purpose of Rhodes' book was to “relate the importance of the respective contributions and to leave as well a memorial to their accomplishments.” Again, this memorialization does not include members of Chatham's black community. He does not mention the Provincial Freeman in his discussion of Chatham’s newspaper industry. He failed to discuss the need for black schools, their names, locations, or the community leaders who built them and the teachers who worked within them. The only black person in the book appeared in a photograph that Rhodes included; a man standing inside a partially built sleigh over a caption that caption reads: “Workers and sleigh at the Milner Carriage Factory in the early part of this century.”

**Conclusion:**

These works of local history share the distinction of either being self-published, published by local advertising companies or funded by the Chamber of Commerce. As such, these works could be viewed as deeply homegrown in nature for the purposes of self-congratulatory self-promotion and local educational interest. These histories are also not particularly unique to small town Ontario nineteenth century historiography in that they "concentrated upon politics and the lives of prominent citizens." What is evident across the historiography is that blacks in early Chatham are consistently unobserved; they appear as impermanent nuisances or vague curiosities that are not local in spirit even if they happened to

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169 Ibid., NP.
170 Ibid., 41.
live in the city. What is problematic is the fact that something as unmistakable as the black lives in Chatham's early settlement has remained peripheral to the building of a heroic and heavily detailed local narrative concerning Chatham's role as haven for runaway slaves. These histories tell us that blacks may have existed in the city but whites were unwilling and unlikely to recognize them in any real capacity. They were made "not of the nation" the instant they entered it and would remain so for generations. As outsiders and visitors their historical distinction would only take shape within the context of the city's need to reify its prominence within the "Promised Land". This historiography proves at once the need for recuperative history and the problematic nature of Chatham's local Anglo-historical identity. As this history was the dominant local narrative, it also provides the foundation for black alienation from the local imaginary. The following chapter builds upon this early history, taking into account the demographic details of black ingress to the town of Chatham. It also weighs the intellectual and socio-economic contexts of a class of blacks arriving in Chatham in the middle of the nineteenth century. Examining who these individuals were and/or who they imagined themselves to be contributes to a move away from the complete non-differentiation of "blacks" in Chatham's history.
Chapter 2

Black Middle-Class Tradition Crosses the 49th Parallel

Figure 4: Browning Family, 1910s. Seated left to right: Chatham residents Martha Browning (nee Duckett) and her husband John Henry Browning. Standing left to right: son David Browning and youngest daughter Nellie Grace Browning. Absent from photo: sisters Isabella Browning and Mary E. Browning. In the 1901 census, John Browning is listed as a labourer and his daughter Isabella, then 14 years of age, was listed as a domestic. In the 1911 census, Nellie Grace, pictured here, was listed as a 13-year-old live-in domestic for a Chatham clergyman. Privately held by C.Poole.
"The want of a decent exterior is so repulsive, as to at once bar the affections, and entirely exclude us from the society, of all persons of taste and refinement."

Lewis Woodson

Figure 5: An older Grace Browning, born in Ontario in 1898.
Census data informs us that some black emigrants (free blacks and fugitive) who settled in Chatham arrived from states such as Mississippi, Tennessee, Virginia, Ohio, Delaware, Maryland, and North Carolina. Due to limitations such as a general lack of detailed record keeping and the likely absence of any desire to further report one's origins, we do not know very much about where blacks in Chatham originated. However, their geographic origins could potentially tell us where they came from and offer a glimpse into who these individuals were and the conditions that prompted their expatriation. Beyond our appreciation for and understanding of the impact of the Fugitive Slave Act of the 1850, which intensified the U.S. commitment to slavery and increased the restrictions on free blacks, the view that the majority of blacks leaving the United States were escaped slaves has narrowed our analytical plane by diminishing the complexity of the emigration narrative. When discussing blacks in Canada, it should not be enough to focus on the moment of their arrival, where they settled once arrived, the impact of their settlement on their white "hosts," or the conditions under which they began their new lives. Works such as Lorene Brigden's "On Their Own Terms: Temperance in Southern Ontario's Black Community, 1830-1860," and Willie J. Harrell's discussion of nineteenth-century black Canadian rhetoric among "Black Canadian Jeremiahs," for example, include as part of their analysis the significance of the American contexts from within which these individuals emerged. Brigden's work argues that the American "colour/caste system [that] determined class; factors such as free-born status and skin colour established social position, with lighter skin being equated with the higher class," continued to impact the lives of light and dark skinned blacks in Canada. Harrell's entire thesis focuses on how black American social and political life shaped the maturity of a black Canadian discourse of self-determination.¹ The failure within the broader

¹ Lorene Brigden, "On Their Own Terms: Temperance in Southern Ontario's Black Community, 1830-1860," *Ontario History* 101 (2009): 3; Willie J. Harrell, Jr., "‘Thanks be to God that I am Elected to Canada’": The
That the general historical narrative constructs blacks in Canada as escaped slaves searching for safer, more just and secure lives in Canada is largely related to the longstanding historiographical impression that if the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 was the impetus for the increased number of blacks in Canada, those blacks must have all been fugitives, as the law's name suggests. There is a considerable semantic argument to be made concerning whether free blacks should also be called fugitive, or whether there may be an appreciable difference between the definition of "fugitive" (individual evading capture) and "emigrant" defined as "a person who comes to a country to live there." It is completely reasonable to suppose that from a historiographical perspective, something as simple as what we choose to call the blacks who made the trip to Canada West in the nineteenth century can impact our opinions about how complex their experience was leading up to their entry and what they may have been prepared to do once they arrived here.

Frank Mackey, in Done with Slavery: The Black Fact in Montreal, 1760-1840 states:

The conflation of "negro" with "slave" has been a persistent problem. It was a feature of early British and French laws that used the terms negro or nègre to mean "slave." It has led to the popular notions that virtually all blacks in...
Canada in the nineteenth century were fugitive American slaves.\textsuperscript{3} That "slave" was constructed as synonymous with "black" fits superbly with the narratives discussed in the previous chapter. If the assumption is that all blacks arriving in Canada were fugitive slaves in need of assistance, white benevolence takes its place at the centre of the Promised Land narrative. By failing to insist on these distinctions, the historiography is incomplete. This incompleteness is not neutral in that it presupposes a uniformity that diminishes black life to a single narrative.

These emigrants were not people arriving devoid of personal histories, opinions, or ideas about emancipation and future (re)settlement. For example, the traditional narrative of black arrival also fails to raise questions as to why they settled in one locale instead of another. As Howard Law argues in his study about the ideology of ex-slaves in the Chatham and Buxton area:

\begin{quote}
Why did the blacks remain in an area that, although admittedly prosperous, was often racist? I propose that these blacks, especially the Chatham Afro-Americans, were driven by a desire to conform to certain white standards of behaviour. In other words, deliberate and partial acculturation was economically advantageous for the ex-slaves.\textsuperscript{4}
\end{quote}

Here Law guides his audience to consider the strangeness of Chatham as a choice location as opposed to all-black settlements such as Buxton or Dresden, complicating an adherence to a simple arrival narrative that suggests a singular push factor leading to a haphazard dispersal of

\textsuperscript{3} Frank Mackey, \textit{Done with Slavery: The Black Fact in Montreal, 1760-1840} (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010), 98. See also: Jill Vickers, Annette Isaac, \textit{The Politics of Race: Canada, the United States, and Australia} (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 81: "Though slavery never existed in Canada on a large scale—or at all after Confederation (1867)—all Blacks were stigmatized to some extent by it. Blacks in Canada were affected by local segregation regimes devised to maintain social control and distance. Since slavery had been abolished in the British Empire before Confederation, Blacks were descendants of slaves, Loyalists, or ex-slaves freed by the British during the revolution or the War of 1812; or they were escaped slaves who sought freedom by leaving the United States via the Underground Railway."

\textsuperscript{4} Howard Law, "Self-Reliance is the True Road to Independence": Ideology and the Ex-Slaves in Buxton and Chatham," in \textit{A Nation of Immigrants: Women, Workers and Communities in Canadian History, 1840s-1960s}, eds., Franca Iacovota, Paula Draper, Robert Ventresca (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002): 85. Emphasis added. See also: Michael Wayne, "Reassessment." Argues that the lives of blacks who settled among whites remains under-researched.
bodies crossing into the "Promised Land." (Law is one of a few who presumes premeditation, design, or strategy beyond the goal of crossing the 49th parallel).

What is the likelihood that free and freed blacks, as well as escaped slaves, not only chose to make their way to Canada, but also made informed decisions and consciously selected their location of settlement intentionally and for specific and identifiable reasons? If we agree that the vast majority of these individuals began their journeys to Canada in the United States, should we not also interrogate the popular discourses created and circulated by the black elite, black ideologues and abolitionists who were working in earnest to debate, reshape, and reform American society? What were their opinions about freedom and black potentiality, black emigration, assimilation and/or segregation and how did these opinions take shape once they relocated? Using the history of the lived experience of free blacks in United States, I will analyze the counts, households, and family configurations of blacks in the 1861 census for Chatham Town in order to discover how and whether the number of free blacks and fugitive slaves can be reasonably determined. Second, I assess the variety of occupations of American-born blacks in Chatham in 1861 in order to further establish the likelihood of their origins and/or socio-economic status upon their arrival to Chatham. Lastly, I look at Mary Ann Shadd Cary and her contemporaries' views on blackness, nationalism, assimilation and integration through the lens of cultural trauma theory. It is my contention that a brief foray into these debates may lend some much-needed context to the type of black people who were attracted to Chatham, Ontario, or those who, as Michael Wayne states, displayed "apparent willingness…to settle in communities where they were outnumbered."²

This chapter, then, examines a black identity that was evident in Chatham, one that has not yet been given its due where the early history of blacks in Canada is concerned: a specific

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nineteenth century black middle class consciousness that built upon existing African American constructions of ideal blackness, one that arrived intact, attracted like-minded individuals, and rooted itself deeply within the local landscape. Uncovering the lives, behaviours and philosophies of free blacks in the United States prior to the 1860s, as well as discussing the debates concerning assimilation and emigration, allows for a construction of a new narrative, one that locates middle class consciousness among blacks in Chatham. And while this middle-class perspective cannot be constructed as representative, their class privilege ensured that their views would be influential in shaping and promulgating a particular nineteenth century black identity. They were at the centre of a black American experiment that was unambiguous in its middle-class design and whose purpose was to forever abrogate claims of blacks' incapacity for self-determination.

**Origins: Population Counts and Sex Ratio**

The first difficulty occurs when we consider the question of the literal origins of the free blacks and escaped black slaves arriving to Canada. It is curious that though a number of scholars would argue that there is no way to accurately determine the ratio of free to escaped blacks in Canada, all but the most rigorous works of black history in Canada tend to assume that they were all fugitive slaves who arrived with no "money or skills" or who "arrived with just the clothes on their backs." Though Robin Winks states in *Blacks in Canada* that "[w]hile the majority of Negroes in the Canadas of the 1850s were thought to be fugitive slaves, it is well understood that many were freemen," I would argue that the scholarship that has followed his seminal and largely uncontested work in black history in Canada has forgotten this "well

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understood fact," a far from minor detail.\(^7\) The use of the word fugitive, especially within the context of the Underground Railroad's romanticized narrative essentializes the prior status of servitude of blacks arriving to Canada. The scholarship rarely distinguishes between free blacks leaving the United States and those fleeing abject servitude. It is also important to qualify the fact that though escaped slaves came to Canada, we cannot determine how many came directly from plantation slavery to the shores of the Detroit or Ohio Rivers or how many of them had suffered under slavery and had escaped to and settled in the northern states years before crossing the border into Canada. If these histories were written to simply detail or announce the arrival of blacks, one supposes it unfair to expect any further details concerning their actual lived experience beyond their arrival. It was enough to report that "the flow of Blacks to Canada soared."\(^8\) The well from whence the flow originated was surely a footnote at best to what were then perceived to be the larger issues at hand. Nevertheless, a focus on the origins of blacks coming to Canada, and to Chatham specifically is much more than historical minutia. The status of these individuals in the United States prior to their emigration and the circumstances under which these individuals left the United States had a definite impact on the kinds of lives that became possible once they arrived in Canada. By understanding their likely motivations, beyond escaping the master's lash, it may be possible to better understand the kind of blackness that is evident in Chatham, Ontario.

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There is some evidence that free blacks made up the majority of those who settled in Canada West, and my findings reflect the likelihood that this was particularly true of blacks in Chatham. Michael Wayne suggests that it is unlikely that escaped slaves made up the majority of blacks in Canada West for several compelling reasons. First, it is unlikely due to the fact the numbers are "inconsistent with what we know about the incidence of successful flight" by escaped slaves.\textsuperscript{9} He claims that "[n]o more than 1,000 slaves escaped during any given year, and of these the vast majority settled in free states," and that it is unlikely that any "more than a small fraction took up residence outside the United States."\textsuperscript{10} Second, by looking at the states of origin (where listed) of blacks in the 1861 census, Wayne suggests that while "over 70 per cent" came from slave states, not all blacks living in slave states were in fact slaves.\textsuperscript{11} Wayne's reassessment of the 1861 census shows that the majority of blacks identifying their state of origin came from Maryland, Virginia, or Kentucky and that those states also had the highest number of free blacks for the same year.\textsuperscript{12}

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|}
\hline
Year & Number \\
\hline
1850 & 434,449 \\
1860 & 488,070 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Population of Free blacks - U.S. Nationally\textsuperscript{13}}
\end{table}

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid.,
\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., 472.
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 472. "Over 150,000 free blacks lived in these three states in 1860. Free blacks represented 49.5 per cent of the black population in Maryland, 10.6 per cent in Virginia, and 4.5 per cent in Kentucky."
Table 2: Population of Free blacks - By State

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>1850</th>
<th>1860</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maryland (largest pop. of free blacks)</td>
<td>74,723</td>
<td>83,942</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virginia (2nd largest pop. of free blacks)</td>
<td>54,333</td>
<td>58,042</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Carolina (3rd largest pop. of free blacks)</td>
<td>27,463</td>
<td>30,463</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delaware (4th largest pop. of free blacks)</td>
<td>18,073</td>
<td>19,829</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kentucky (7th largest pop. of free blacks)</td>
<td>10,011</td>
<td>10,684</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennessee (9th largest pop. of free blacks)</td>
<td>6422</td>
<td>7300</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Chatham, it does not appear as though enumerators were at all instructed to record the actual American state of origin for blacks in the city. For example, an entry in the 1871 census for the Town of Chatham for George Washington, a 28-year-old porter, shows "United States" as "Country or Province of Birth," but it also shows that the enumerator had originally written "Baltimore" and had to scratch it out. In Chatham, it was not until the 1881 census that any indication of states of origin was given; within that particular census Virginia, Delaware, Ohio, Kentucky, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Mississippi are listed. Ohio abolished slavery at the beginning of the nineteenth century. However, Virginia, North Carolina, and Delaware had the second, third, and fourth highest number of free blacks in the United States at the time.  

Michael Wayne suggests another method of determining the ratio of free blacks to escaped slaves in Canada West that is most useful when trying to discover the origins of at least some of the blacks who settled in Chatham. By taking the number of women listed in the 1861 manuscript census of Canada West who were born in slave states, together with scholarly "best estimates" that suggest that the majority of escapees were men (approximately 75 percent), Wayne surmises, based on the sex ratio of blacks born in slave states who were living in Canada West, of the "9,800 blacks born in the United States, only 34 per cent were fugitives."  

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15 Ibid.  
American-born blacks represented only 57.5 per cent of all blacks in Canada West, Wayne concludes that slightly under 20 per cent of all blacks in the province were fugitives. If we are to take his calculations as accurate, we know that Kent County had the highest number of blacks in Canada West in 1861, and that Chatham was second only to Raleigh, Ontario, as having the largest concentration of blacks within a single town. What is the likelihood that this ratio of escaped to free blacks is true in Chatham as well? The total number of blacks in Chatham in 1861 was 1256. Though we do not have their states of origin from the 1861 census, of those 1256 blacks in Chatham, 903 were American-born and 349 were Canadian-born. Therefore American-born blacks made up the majority of blacks living in Chatham in 1861 at almost 72 percent of black population. Using Wayne's calculations, only 24.5 per cent or around 307 of the total 903 American-born blacks in Chatham might have been fugitives.

A little less subjective is the question of the sex ratio of escaped slaves. The sex ratio in Chatham is inconsistent with what we would expect from a population of blacks largely made up of escaped slaves. If scholars have indeed reached a general consensus concerning the uneven rate of successful escapes that was largely determined by the sex of the escapee, the data from Chatham's 1861 black population is quite instructive. As mentioned, the 1861 census shows 1256 blacks living in Chatham in that particular census year. The average age of the 349 Canadian born blacks in Chatham in 1861 was approximately 8 years of age. The average age of the 903 American born black women and men living in Chatham in 1861 was 29 years and 31 years respectively. If all Chatham blacks had been escaped slaves and if men represented 75 percent of successful escapes, we would expect the sex ratio in Chatham be around 677 black men to 225

17 Ibid.
18 903 American born plus 349 Canadian born equals 1252 in total. The discrepancy between the 1252 being analyzed and the total number of 1256 is due to two individuals listing their birthplace as "West Indian," one individual declaring "Africa" as their place of birth, and one individual indicating England as their place of birth.
black women. To the contrary: the 1861 census shows that there were 452 American born black men to 451 American born black women living in Chatham, indicating that not only was the sex ratio among American born blacks not skewed to favour the number of men, but that the ratio had, in fact, almost reached parity.

Moreover, the age breakdown in Table 3 suggests there were two unique waves of immigration to the city. There is significant gender disparity among individuals ages 36 to 45 and 46 to 55, where there are approximately 20 percent and 40 percent fewer women per age group respectively. This indicates that perhaps this older group had arrived in Chatham earlier and the gender ratio suggests there may have been more escaped slaves in this group. The younger age groups, 16 to 25 and 26 to 35 reveals that there were in fact more women than men. Additionally, the younger age groups make up a greater proportion of the population (194+188=382) than the older age group (148+99=247). Interestingly, however, and something that indicates the limitations of this type of deduction, though the oldest groups, 56 to 65 and 66+, made up a smaller proportion overall, they also demonstrate near gender parity, especially in the group 56 to 65. And if we consider only those American born individuals age 20 and up, the sex ratio is 331 men to 312 women, or 51.4 percent men and 48.5 percent women, again, reaching near parity.

### Table 3: Age and Sex ratio: 1861 census US born

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-9</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-15</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>16-25</strong></td>
<td><strong>108</strong></td>
<td><strong>86</strong></td>
<td><strong>194</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>26-35</strong></td>
<td><strong>101</strong></td>
<td><strong>87</strong></td>
<td><strong>188</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>36-45</strong></td>
<td><strong>67</strong></td>
<td><strong>81</strong></td>
<td><strong>148</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>46-55</strong></td>
<td><strong>38</strong></td>
<td><strong>61</strong></td>
<td><strong>99</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56-65</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66+</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>451</strong></td>
<td><strong>452</strong></td>
<td><strong>903</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Another reasonable deduction extends to the proportional sex ratio present in the city. The near equal number of black men and black women also reveals that it is likely that some of these men and women arrived in Chatham together, as married couples. In the 1861 census, 255 households contained black residents, housing approximately 284 black families in total. Of those 284 families, 84 were made up of American parents whose first Canadian born child was also the first-born of the family. In the case of these 84 families, it would be very difficult to determine when the couple met, even if they both listed their places of birth in the United States. Without further proof in terms of when and where they were married, if their first child was born in Canada, they could have just as likely met and married in Chatham as travelled to Chatham as a couple. Given the fact that the average age of the "first born and first Canadian born" child was 8.6 years; we know that, on average, these families relocated to Chatham around 1853. By looking at families that had American born and Canadian born children, as well as those families where the parents and children were all American born at the time of the census, we are offered a great deal more in terms of inferential data. By looking at the age of the last-born American child and the first-born Canadian child, I was able to uncover a smaller window of arrival of these particular families. Forty-eight families in the 1861 census had both Canadian and U.S. born children. The average age of the last American born child was 10 years and the average age of the first Canadian born child was 5.5 years. Given the average difference of 4.5 years, it is possible too that those families arrived in Canada by at least 1857.

As well, in those households where there were American born children and American and Canadian born children, it is likely that those couples may well have relocated from the United States to Chatham together as families. If the household was intact in the 1861 census and the couple had American born children, we can safely assume they had established their families
before coming to Canada. For those with both American and Canadian born children, we can also assume that these couples had already started their families in the United States and continued their families once they arrived in Chatham. This further suggests that it was very unlikely that these individuals arrived as escaped slaves from the United States, since so few families escaped slavery as families. For example, in *Who Speaks for Margaret Garner: The True Story That Inspired Toni Morrison's Beloved*, Mark Reinhardt details the notorious fugitive slave case of Margaret Garner, who, along with her family, attempted to escape slavery. He notes that the Garner case was unique for a number of reasons, one of which was the fact that this was a family escape:

They also stood out for escaping as a family. About 80 percent of runaways were young men seeking freedom alone. Often these men had no wives, or at least no children. Most male runaways who were married or had children left their families behind. Women, more strongly tied to children, were less likely to run (and typically slave girls had begun having children by their late teens)...Very few parties were families, and even when families did escape together, they tended to do so in smaller clusters, not groups of eight, spanning three generations.\(^{19}\)

What this case illustrates is that while it may have been possible (though even in this case they did ultimately get caught), escaping as a family was risky and likely not an option that many individuals chose.

A close reading and count of the households, families, and family surnames within the households indicates that the 108 families that either had only American born (60) or American and Canadian (48) born children represented approximately 585 people in total or almost half (46.5%) of the black population in Chatham total (American and Canadian born/free or fugitive). This is to say nothing of those 91 households where children were not listed.

\(^{19}\) Mark Reinhardt, *Who Speaks for Margaret Garner: The True Story that Inspired Toni Morrison's Beloved* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 15-16.
Here are a few examples to illustrate the process. Adam and Ann Griffith had 10 children. The oldest was 20 years of age in 1861, and it seems that Ann gave birth every 2 to 4 years. Eight of their 10 children were born in the United States; their last American born child, Catherine, was 8 years old at census and their oldest Canadian born child, Ellen, was 5 years old at census. This would indicate that the Griffith family had to have relocated to Canada between 1853 and 1856. In families where there were no American born children, it is still possible to determine some reasonable time frame of the families' arrival, though it tells us nothing about their origins or their previous status of servitude. However, Solomon and Catharine White were both born in Kentucky and were 31 and 38 years of age at the time of the census. The United States Federal Census indicates that they had been married 47 years in 1900, which would suggest that they married in 1853. All of their children in 1861, John (8 years old), Catherine (6 years old), William (2 years old), and Arabella (1 year old), were born in Canada. This suggests that Solomon and Catherine had been in Canada for at least 8 years, the age of their oldest son. This would also coincide with the date of their marriage. In cases where whole families were American born, again, we can determine a general idea of the date of their emigration to Canada. For example, Francis Hall was a grocer in the city who lived in a two-story house with his wife Jane, and their children: Richard (16 years old), Elizabeth (14 years old), and Fanny (2 years old). All of the Hall children, at least up until 1861, were American born. This means that Francis and Jane had to have moved to Chatham after Fanny's birth in the United States, around 1859.

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20 1880 United States Federal Census also shows that Solomon and Catharine's parents were also born in Kentucky.
21 1880 United States Federal Census Record, Schedule 1, Jackson County Michigan, page 29, shows the White household living in Jackson Michigan. The family was considerably larger at the time of census; Solomon White still listed as Painter, wife Catharine listed as " Keeps Home," son William, daughter Arabella. The new editions to the family since the 1861 Canadian census, Solomon (15), Mary (12), Nellie (10), and Howard (8) were all Canadian born. Caleb (5) and Lizzie Bell (2) were both born in Michigan, which suggests the Whites returned to the United States between 1872 and 1875.
Occupations:

A review of the occupations listed in the census is also useful when attempting to determine the origins of the blacks who arrived in Chatham in 1861. The breakdown of occupations, however, is challenging and admittedly subjective given the limited detail offered in the census itself. According to Bruce Curtis, in the 1861 census "compilation clerks were left to interpret a great many ambiguous and confusing entries on the schedules," and provided few reasons for the rationales they employed.22 As such, "a large number of variations…resulted in the partial completion of schedules."23 This confusion was no more evident than in the occupational category of the 1861 census, where a "truncated catalogue of occupations or trades" was not provided, which caused enumerators to "[fill] the column with the most diverse material."24 In his description of the process by which the 1861 census was taken, Curtis succeeds in illustrating that the census was heavily "modeled [by] the world in which William Hutton [secretary of Registration and Statistics] and other gentlemen proprietors lived."25 This world was one marked by a non-variable perspective on occupational categories. Theodore Hershberg and Robert Dockhorn summarize the confusion in their article entitled "Occupational Classification":

wide variations existed in the work performed by persons designated simply as 'clerk'; skilled artisans might be employers, self-employed without assistants, or employed by others; laborers who worked regularly could not be distinguished from more transient 'day' laborers; occupational titles alone do not make clear the work context, especially whether the work was done by hand or with machines, or whether workers labored alone, in small shops, or in large factories.26

24 Ibid., 206.
25 Ibid., 199-200.
David Burley, in *A Particular Condition in Life: Self-Employment and Social Mobility in Mid-Victorian Brantford, Ontario*, provides another insightful qualification to social historians' ranking of occupations, given the likelihood of self-employment in one or more trades and services in the middle of the nineteenth century. While "working on one's own account," which was the census designation for those who were likely to be self-employed, is not herein analyzed as part of the occupational groupings, it is important to note that in this early period, a number of black inhabitants in Chatham worked as sole proprietors of their respective businesses. However, since enumerators were often left to their own logic and choice of occupation title, the grouping of occupations into some meaningful categories proves challenging.

Several important works concerning the categorization of census occupations have proven useful in determining the best method of understanding the enumerators' notations. The following discussion focuses entirely on the issue of "occupational structure" which, according to Michael B. Katz, has often been confused with a study in "occupational mobility." Stuart Blumin, Clyde Griffen, Michael Katz, Theodore Hershburg, and Laurence Glascow participated in a collaborative effort to determine the likelihood of scholarly agreement in developing a "vertical classification scheme." This collaboration produced "five vertical categories: high white-collar and professional; low white-collar and proprietary; skilled; and two unskilled groups." The two unskilled groups were divided into those occupations that had a "specified function (such as 'ditch digger') and those 'unspecified' with only the designation, 'laborer'."

---

29 Hershberg and Dockhorn, "Occupational Classification," 60.
30 Ibid.
31 Ibid.
With these studies in mind, I selected the reasonably ordered occupational designations developed by the Center for Technology and Teacher Education at the University of Virginia. This categorization best reflected the occupations appearing in Chatham's 1861 census, and, given the focus on category over occupational mobility, it provided the clearest analytical structure. Considering Chatham was as much an agricultural centre as it was a growing municipality, it was important to select a classification that acknowledged farming within its own designation. The University of Virginia classification considered the following categories: professional/merchant, farming/planting, clerk/proprietors, artisans, and unskilled. When it came to placing the occupations within these classifications, certain categorizations were obvious. For example, "Doctor" would be considered a professional designation and "Cabinet Making" is clearly a skilled trade that could be fairly considered under the "Artisan" category. However, the unfortunately common occupation of "Labourer" on the census makes it difficult to provide any detail concerning what these men did for a living. Though this most frequently cited occupation is unfortunately lacking in specificity, I use the University of Virginia categorization in order to illustrate the number of skilled and semi-skilled occupations that were represented on the 1861 census, versus those that, given the limited information we have, can best be described as unskilled.

Seventy-two percent of the 452 American born black men, or 326 in total, listed their occupation in the 1861 Chatham census. Of these occupations, 169 fell under the "unskilled" category. This indicates that about 51 percent of the total 326 reported occupations were listed as unskilled. These proportions indicate that nearly half of the other occupations practiced by American born black men could be considered professional, craftsman, farmers, businessmen or business owners. These occupations indicate that some training, apprenticeship and/or skill were
required before plying one's craft. As well, occupations such as "Store Keeper", "Tavern Keeper", "Eating House," and "Gentleman," indicate that these individuals possessed adequate financial capital to pursue their trade and provide those services. One could also assume that in the case of "Grocer," the individual would be the proprietor. It would seem likely that if they were not the owner of the storefront, the enumerator would have settled for the "Clerk" designation in the census.

Table 4: 1861 Occupations of US-born Black Males, Chatham Census

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupational Classification</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Professional and Merchant</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Botanic Doctor</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctor</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineer</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gentleman</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minister</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missionary</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Clerks and Proprietors</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bar Keeper</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book Agent</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerk</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eating House</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grocer</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land Agent</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Store Keeper</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tavern Keeper</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tobacconist</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Artisans</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apprentice</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barber</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blacksmith</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brick Layer</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butcher</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cabinet Maker</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpenter</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cook</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooper</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gunsmith</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cabinet Maker</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpenter</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cook</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooper</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gunsmith</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Machinist</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mason</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moulder</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Painter</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plasterer</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Printer</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sawyer</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serge Maker</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoemaker</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tailor</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tinsmith</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upholster</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wagon Maker</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watch Maker</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Unskilled Workers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Drayman</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Express-man</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labourer</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Livery</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ostler</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Porter</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sailor</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Servant</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steward</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teamster</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Farmers and Planters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gardner</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total** 326
Unfortunately, women's occupations were underreported in the 1861 census because "compilers did not count women's occupations" due to "cultural conventions regarding the legitimacy of women's employment."\(^{33}\) As Andrew Holman noted in *A Sense of Their Duty: Middle-Class Formation in Victorian Ontario Towns,* "[m]ost married women in the middling ranks…had no classifiable paid occupation, and evidence of their unwaged work is fragmentary. The numbers cited for women in the records on paid occupations are few and, perhaps, unrepresentative.\(^{34}\) Given the mid-century reluctance to acknowledge women's paid and unpaid labour, where women's occupations were recorded in the census, it is reasonable to assume that there was some insistence on the part of the women to have their occupations recognized.

Of the 451 women listed, approximately 30 percent listed some identifiable occupation other than "Spinster," "Married Woman," and "Widow," which were common catchalls used for women by enumerators across Canada East and Canada West. As Curtis points out,

> Many though not all enumerators in Canada East recognized only teacher, nun, and servant or day labourer as women's occupations. Some in Canada West called all women of working age 'seamstress' or 'spinster,' and we have seen John Beatty rechristening women field labourers as 'servants.'\(^{35}\)

As the following tables make plain, there were almost as many women working in what could be considered trained or semi-skilled occupations as there were women working in unskilled service employment.

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Table 5: 1861 Occupations of US-born Females, Chatham Census

Occupational Classification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skilled/Semi-Skilled/Clerk/Proprietor</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apprentice</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barber</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cook</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eating House</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Editress</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grocery</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gunsmith</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Midwife</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miliner</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurse</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seamstress</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoebinder</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoemaker</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tailoress</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tavern Keeper</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>62</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unskilled Workers</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Domestic</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labourer</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurse Girl</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stewardess</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Servant</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washer Woman</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>70</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Total                                | 132    |

The occupations, then, represented by American-born working-age adults in Chatham in 1861 reflect their origins. According to Ira Berlin's *Slaves Without Masters*, which chronicles the lives of free blacks in the south from 1789 until 1860, the "skilled black tradesmen and artisans," who made up a "disproportionate share of the free Negro emigrants," had developed "[t]he self-esteem generated by their success," which led them to believe that "things could be different and
better…elsewhere."\(^{36}\) Similarly, occupational structure, according to James O. Horton in his study of northern free blacks, depended on a number of different factors and contributed greatly to the self-perception of certain free blacks, and:

provide[d] clues to the class structure of black society…there were important status distinctions, such as color…As illustrated by the census occupational data, there was a significant link between skin color and occupation. Mulattoes tended to hold a disproportionate share of skilled employment among African Americans and were most likely to run their own businesses…Mulattoes tended to have been born in the South, and since southern blacks were most likely to have been skilled workers before they migrated north, they were also most likely to hold skilled employment in their new homes.\(^{37}\)

Unfortunately, the race column in the 1861 census is as unreliable as that of occupation. "Suspect even to contemporaries," the 1861 census for Chatham listed 373 individuals as "Mulatto," a number that is highly debatable.\(^{38}\) Though still a statistically relevant one third of the total black population, the local photography archive suggests that the number of individuals who could, by aesthetic standard rather than that of identifiable mixed parentage, be considered "Mulatto" would be at least half if not more of the total black population. Nevertheless, Horton characterizes the links that free blacks made between their occupation, socio-economic status, and relative standing within the black community, stating:

Black craftsmen, entrepreneurs, and professionals made up an important segment of black society. Their network of associations reached beyond local and regional boundaries to black communities in the East, the Midwest, and even to the West Coast. As the most literate segment of black society, they were able to communicate through letters and the pages of black newspapers which served local areas and functioned as a national press. In this way community news was spread, and personal ties were maintained.\(^{39}\)

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\(^{36}\) Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters*, 166.


\(^{39}\) Horton, *In Hope of Liberty*, 122.
Horton highlights the "similar background and experiences" shared among this particular class of blacks who extended their influence as they made their way north.\footnote{Ibid.}

In every northern city studied, they were more likely to be migrants who had been born in the South, reflecting the generally higher skill levels of free blacks in that region. They were also likely to be lighter in skin color than African-American workers at the lower end of the occupational scale. Mulattoes made up only 40 percent of total black workforce in all the cities we studied, but they constituted 52 percent of the skilled workers, entrepreneurs, and professional and were spread fairly evenly among these categories.\footnote{Ibid.}

This evidence suggests that a recognizable proportion of the black men and women who made their way to Chatham in the middle of the nineteenth century were members of this particularly mobile class of blacks. Though many may have learned their trade and skills while they were still slaves, there is no reason to believe that they had not worked in their respective trades as free men and women in the United States after having either escaped to the north or after having purchased their own freedom. It is unlikely that the black population in mid-nineteenth century Chatham was solely made up of free blacks, or of blacks who had never experienced slavery. It is equally unlikely, however, that the number of blacks arriving as recent escapees trumped the number of blacks who appeared to participate in planned relocation with sufficient resources and intact families. The group consciousness evident among some of Chatham's early blacks reflected the class perspectives and worldview apparent among the free blacks from the southern United States, who would later become some of the most vocal supporters of emigration.

It is highly improbable that blacks in Chatham could have participated in professions such as medicine, teaching, engineering, editor/ess, gentleman, merchant, preacher/reverend while they were slaves. Book agents, clerks, grocers, tavern keepers, and even those working in the artisan fields such as watchmaker, milliner, shoemaker, midwife, mason and barber may have been able to ply their trade in servitude. That a healthy number of these individuals arrived
having either plied their trade as free and educated blacks in the north (and perhaps the south, as Berlin uncovers), or as escaped slaves who had settled in the north for some time is probable. It is unlikely that these men were able to learn and ply their trade in the time between 1850 and 1861 to the extent that they did in Chatham. Given the average age of American born black men in Chatham, 30 years of age would be considered late to have begun to learn their trade upon arrival in Canada. Therefore, a number of the American born blacks in Chatham came to Chatham as professionals and skilled and semi-skilled tradesmen, with enough capital to buy storefronts and financial freedom to choose to work in their respective occupations. These occupations do not suggest a predominance of newly escaped slaves, arriving in Chatham between 1850 and 1860, shoeless, penniless and without a plan. That there was a preponderance of wealthy and capable black men and a number of educated and skilled black women in Chatham in 1861 should provide at least a reasonable qualification to the notion that their arrival was desperate, unplanned, and haphazard.

As previously mentioned, the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 has often been identified as the major impetus for black removal to Canada. Scholars note that, "[o]ften referred to as 'Canaan," Canada's role as the Promised Land was all but confirmed in the post-1850s era. Often caught

42See Willie J. Harrell, Origins of the African American Jeremiad: Rhetorical Strategies of Social Protest and Activism, 1760-1861 (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2011), 8. "Haunted by the FSA [Fugitive Slave Act], banned from obtaining educational advancement, and restricted to the most unskilled jobs, life in Canada offered the promise of liberty and opportunity to all black Americans, free and fugitive alike. According to one estimate, within a few months after the enactment of the FSA, approximately 3,000 fugitives found liberty on Canadian soil." Also: Clayton E. Cramer, Black Demographic Data: 1790-1860: A Sourcebook (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1997), 60. "After passage of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, at least 20,000 black Americans crossed into Canada, with 3,000 entering Canada from the United States in a single ninety-day period." See also Fred Landon's "The Negro Migration to Canada after the Passing of the Fugitive Slave Act," Journal of Negro History 5, no. 1 (1920): 26. "The Underground Railroad system was never so successful in all its history as after 1850."

43 Harrell, Origins of the African American Jeremiad, 8. See also Afua Cooper, "The Fluid Frontier: Blacks and the Detroit River Region, A Focus on Henry Bibb," Canadian Review of American Studies 30, no. 2 (2000): 135-136. "The FSL [Fugitive Slave Act] caused panic among Blacks who had escaped slavery and were living in the North as free persons…It was not only the fleeing bondsperson that came into Ontario and Michigan. Thousands of free Black Americans, disillusioned with the way they were treated, decided that they would never achieve equality in America and thus moved away."

80
up in the awe and romance of the Underground Railroad narrative, where the focus remains squarely on slaves fleeing bondage and increasing oppression, the story of the fugitive often confuses the plight of the escapee with that of free blacks leaving the northern states. As stated by Tilden G. Edelstein in the Dover Edition of Benjamin Drew's *Refugees from Slavery: Autobiographies of Fugitive Slaves in Canada*:

Although it is clear from *A North-Side View of Slavery* that most fugitive slaves were in Canada to escape the hardships of southern slavery, to a lesser extent they testified that they were there because the northern United States practiced legal and extra-legal discrimination against African Americans—free or fugitive. Northern states nearest the South, fearing the influx of fugitive slaves, had passed restrictive legislation.44

According to Edelstein, "[t]he greatest wave of northern African Americans fleeing to Canada followed the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850."45

It is not implausible that the "refugee" label is often mistaken for that of "fugitive," especially within the context of the Underground Railroad, which was, by definition, a series of routes, systems, individuals, and processes that helped blacks escape slavery. Also by definition, the free black was not under the same pressure to travel under the secretive cloak of darkness and code words. Fred Landon, in "The Negro Migration to Canada after the Passing of the Fugitive Slave Act," noted that the black population in the northern states, "increased by 30,000 in the decade after 1850," and that it was "Ohio, Michigan, and Illinois," whose black population increased during that same period.46 Moving to the northern states meant that "the runaway slave or the free man of color" could remove to Canada should the racially oppressive laws and customs prove dangerous or intolerable.47

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45 Drew, Refugees from Slavery, xii.
Hidden within the Underground Railroad narrative are the free blacks who arrived "with plenty of means to take care of themselves," or, as maintained within the pages of *The Voice of the Fugitive* newspaper in 1851: "Men of capital with good property, some of whom are worth thousands, are settling among us from the northern states." Landon, using *The Voice of the Fugitive* as his evidence, showed that the newspaper spoke in detail about economic character of the new arrivals:

In the issue of July 1, 1852, it is noted that "22 from Indiana passed through to Amherstburg, with four fine covered wagons [sic] and eight horses. A few weeks ago six or eight such teams came from the same state into Canada." In a later issue it was stated "we know of several families of free people of color who have moved here from the northern states this summer who have brought with them property to the amount of £30,000."

The Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 encouraged enslaved blacks to seek freedom and "[drove] out [the] brains and money" of free blacks from the northern states. However, was it the only factor in the relocation of American blacks to Canada? Could the timing of and reasons for removal from the United States suggest the class of individuals relocating to Canada?

As stated in my analysis of the families in the 1861 census, in the case of the 84 families with American-born parents whose first child was Canadian born, it is difficult to determine whether those couples met and married in the United States before coming to Canada to start their families. However, given that the average age of the "first born and first Canadian born" child was 8.6 years, on average these families immigrated to Canada around 1853. This suggests that the childless couples or American born individuals meeting for the first time in Canada may have been influenced by the passing of the Fugitive Slave Act, given the date proximity between 1850 and 1853. However, calculating the age differences between the last American born child

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48 Ibid., 27.
49 Landon, "The Negro Migration to Canada," 27.
and first Canadian born child in the 48 families where this occurred, we can deduce that these families relocated in and around 1857. This date is significant and is not often identified as a push factor in Canadian literature concerning the Underground Railroad or black relocation to Canada, but it provides additional evidence that might assist in determining the type of individuals and families who actively decided to leave the United States. On March 6, 1857, the Supreme Court of the United States of America "decided the case of Dred Scott v. Sandford and declared that blacks were not citizens of the United States but property and had no right to sue for freedom in a court of law."\footnote{Junius P. Rodriguez, \\textit{Slavery in the United States: A Social, Political and Historical Encyclopedia} (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC Clio, 2007), 60.} This decision established in law that "blacks had no rights which whites had to recognize;" according to David Blight, "to be black in America was to live in the land of the Dred Scott decision, which, in effect, said, "[y]ou have no future in America."\footnote{"Modern Voices: David Blight on the Dred Scott Decision,\" PBS \url{http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4i3090.html} (October 15, 2012.)} The Dred Scott decision would have a greater impact on middle class Northern blacks than did the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850:

That period between 1857 and the outbreak of the war in 1861 is a time of increasing desperation among northern black leadership. They begin to struggle even with each other over how to define their futures. They have bitter debates over immigration schemes and whether to stay in America…It's a desperate time for black leaders because they've been told now that their people have no future in the country, and their struggle is to define a future.\footnote{"Modern Voices: David Blight on the Dred Scott Decision."}

While slave status already limited the lives of enslaved blacks, for free, propertied, and upwardly mobile blacks the Dred Scott decision tempered any hope that they would one day live in a society that was class based -- a position one could alter through commitment to hard work -- rather than race based. For these individuals, the move was less about reenslavement and more
about the impossibility of equality before the law regardless of educational, political, social, or economic achievement.

Table 6: Black Families Organized by Birth Place of Children

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<tr>
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<th>Exclusively US Born Children</th>
<th>Canadian AND US Born Children</th>
<th>Exclusively Canadian Born Children</th>
<th>Married No Children Indicated</th>
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<td>20</td>
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Origins: African American Press and Free Black Class Consciousness

Cultural trauma

If we can assume for the reasons outlined above that at least a fair number of free blacks immigrated to the Chatham area in the nineteenth century, what can we say about their culture, their worldview, their origins and their expectations upon arrival to Canada? Is it possible to understand their settlement in Chatham proper as being meaningful and purposeful, perhaps in a different way than that of fugitives? By examining the class perception of free blacks, the African American press in the nineteenth century, and the type of individual who settled in nineteenth century Chatham, it is possible to see a particular fusion of black middle-class values among the black emigrants in the city. The type of information and debates these individuals encountered shaped their opinions, informed their subsequent relocations, and directed their

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54 There is one outstanding family where all members listed England as their place of birth. Total number of families (inclusive) 284. Because every household with a black person in it was counted, the number of households without children is somewhat inflated since those black men and women working as live in domestics were listed as no children, while their household counted in the household number count.
goals, aspirations and activities once they arrived in Chatham. As argued at the outset, these individuals fit well within the parameters of cultural trauma theory in that their class, social, and political/abolitionist ties fused in such a way as to profoundly impact their identity/ies and worldview.

*Slaves Without Masters*, Ira Berlin's assessment of the economic, social and political position of free blacks, is helpful when attempting to reconstruct the forces that shaped the character of these individuals. He states that:

> [h]aving learned to squeeze a few precious benefits from their caste status, [free blacks] were not about to surrender them without a guarantee of something better. Freedom within the context of slavery gave free Negroes something to protect and transformed them into a conservative caste. *The general insecurity of free Negro life, the sure knowledge that free Negroes suffered whenever whites felt threatened, and their growing material prosperity reinforced that conservatism.*

The conservatism that Ira Berlin identified among free blacks in the southern United States is a useful point of entry to a discussion of who the black emigrants to Chatham may have been. Berlin argues that the social consciousness developed among free blacks in the South was unique and was influenced as much by class as it was by race. Neither slave nor white, free blacks clung tightly to their class status as the thing that distinguished them from their black brethren.

Similarly, in her book *Black Freemasonry and Middle-Class Realities*, Loretta J. Williams argues that

> It was pragmatic for free and newly freed blacks to attempt to carry themselves as differently as possible from those still enslaved. It was necessary that the community be able to delineate the characteristics of virtue and respect of the freed black man or woman. While sympathies remained with the oppressed masses, the free blacks had their own lives and interests to protect.

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Their literacy, activism, and relative economic independence gave free blacks a profound sense of difference, one that could be harnessed to further support particular perceptions of black potential and black emigration. Free blacks began to leave the south in the nineteenth century, causing the south to lose "some of its more talented, ambitious, and aggressive members." Among these early black spokesmen, Berlin counted Martin Delany (Prince Hall Mason, writer, doctor), Daniel Payne (AME Bishop, educator), Robert Purvis (abolitionist) and David Walker (Prince Hall Mason, abolitionist writer). Between the growing AME leadership, the expansion of Prince Hall Masonry, and the expansion of the black North American press, these men (and a number of women) were well placed to influence and shape abolitionist, emigrationist, and assimilationist discourses. Due to their position "as the wealthiest, best-educated, and best-connected," these men were also "disproportionately important." What was unique among this particular class of free black was that "[t]heir celebration of white values and disdain for the black masses" would influence some of the opinions expressed in the black press and within certain anti-slavery circles. This "free Negro caste" was one dominated by class interests, class mobility, and a profound understanding of and adherence to strictures of black respectability.

Berlin's description of the free black middle class demonstrates the same spirit underlying many of the prescriptive dictates of nineteenth and early twentieth century Prince Hall Masonry in Chatham, discussed in Chapter 3. This particular organization "viewed Black prosperity as an anti-slavery tool that revealed indisputable proof of their self-reliance and accomplishment." As Berlin states, the "closer free Negroes could approximate the white ideal, the greater their

57 Berlin, Slaves Without Masters, 171.
58 Ibid.
59 Ibid, 283.
60 Ibid.
61 Willie J. Harrell, Jr., “‘Thanks be to God that I am Elected to Canada’: The Formulation of the Black Canadian Jeremiad, 1830-1861,” 42, no. 3 (2008): 57.
chances of acceptance."\textsuperscript{62} In Canada, blacks realized that the "prejudice they suffered [here] illustrated that freedom did not eliminate racial hatred," and that "political and legal transformations did not bring about attitudinal changes from the White majority."\textsuperscript{63} For example, as Julia Roberts argues in her analysis of taverns in nineteenth-century Ontario, public spaces were often sites of racial definition and delineation. Within these spaces "[t]ies of good fellowship sometimes stretched to encompass a racially inclusive idea; sometimes they snapped shut to protect the 'whiteness' of informal life."\textsuperscript{64} As discussed in the previous chapter, certain public spaces in Chatham were closed to blacks regardless of their social position (respectable, military, young, old). The legal equality promised to blacks upon arrival to Canada was salient, but, as Barrington Walker suggests, its promise has negatively influenced our historical understanding concerning how blacks existed here once they arrived. Walker argues that historians have often failed "to see beyond the fiction that formal legal equality under the British flag was a proxy for social and economic equality."\textsuperscript{65} These realities were likely not lost on the gentlemen and gentlewomen who made up the black middle class in the United States or later in Canada.

In \textit{Middle-class Blacks in a White Society: Prince Hall Masonry in America}, William A. Muraskin makes similar arguments about behaviour within the context of black institution building. According to Muraskin, "the line of demarcation between those aspiring to middle-class status and the mass of black men became \textit{a visible adherence to bourgeois values and behavior}," and that groups such as Prince Hall Masonry, "Shriners, Knights Templar, Royal Arch Masons, Scottish Rite Masonry, and the Order of the Eastern Star" were created to provide

\textsuperscript{63} Harrell Jr., "The Formulation of the Black Canadian Jeremiad," 62.
\textsuperscript{64} Julia Roberts, "A Mixed Assemblage of Persons," 5.
\textsuperscript{65} Walker, "Following the North Star," footnote 2, 64.
"social distance" and "give reality to the perceived and real differences between the self-proclaimed middle class and the black majority."66 Berlin also points out that the unique position these individuals held in society given the restrictions on members of their race, caused them to "[yearn] to live in a class society where they could escape the stigma of race."67

The early establishment of fraternal organizations, churches, and schools in Chatham also bespeaks not only the presence of class-consciousness but also of financial resources. Despite their modest number, the blacks settling in Chatham during the mid-nineteenth century followed the script of the middle-class tradition established by African Americans by building black schools as early as 1824, churches by 1856, and fraternal organizations by the 1870s. These endeavors could not have been possible without the means and desire to do so on the part of a particular class of blacks in Chatham who were, by all indications, following the scripts they had either learned or helped develop while coming of age in the United States. Given the unlikely notion that all blacks arriving in Chatham were escaped slaves, it would seem that more than a mere handful arrived in Chatham to embark upon an exercise in freedom informed by middle class mores. In fact, free blacks from the south

[b]randishing a finely honed sense of noblesse oblige…occasionally reached out to poorer free Negroes and took the lead in establishing African churches, schools, and fraternal organizations. But even those members of the free Negro elite who dedicated their lives to serving their people often did so with an air of condescension.68

Condescension was widely defined, though. Samuel Ward feared that "some of the black people [would] act in such a manner as to increase, rather than diminish the prejudice against us." In 1882, as described by Natasha Henry in her book Emancipation Day, Isaac Holden, Chatham's First Grand Master of the Prince Hall Masonic Lodge, "gave a moving speech following" the

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67 Berlin, Slaves Without Masters, 276.
68 Ibid., 283.
Emancipation Day parade. In this speech, Holden, a respected member of Chatham's black elite, "reminded listeners to take advantages of the opportunities to improve themselves and strengthen their communities, to show themselves worthy of the rights and privileges granted to them in British North America."\(^{69}\)

Isaac Holden's sentiment here mirrors the opinions of Prince Hall Masonry and middle-class black consciousness. Martin Delany, who moved to Chatham in 1856, and Mary Ann Shadd, who moved to Chatham 1855, embody the reconciliation of radical views and fundamentally conservative values. As is true regarding the record keeping of the Masons, Delany and Shadd not only best exemplify this type of black middle class intellectual, they are the most accessible examples because their privilege, relative fame, and historical significance ensured their place on the historical record thereby leaving considerable documentary sources.

According to Kathy Glass, Delany was influenced by Reverend Lewis Woodson, his mentor.\(^{70}\) According to Woodson:

The "indignity and contempt" directed at black people [by whites],....could only be explained by blacks' "want of proper attention to cleanliness and neatness of dress." He further observed "The want of a decent exterior is so repulsive, as to at once bar the affections, and entirely exclude us from the society, of all persons of taste and refinement." By no mean uncommon, Woodson's fixation on self-presentation sprang largely from the nineteenth-century preoccupation with "respectability."\(^{71}\)

Woodson, fair skinned and freeborn in 1806, "held the black masses responsible for their lowly social and economic condition," and "characterized them as a separate "caste" that had


\(^{71}\) Kathy Glass, *Courting Communities*, 59.
been unfairly discriminated against."\textsuperscript{72} His opinion certainly provides one side of the "meaning struggle," or the attempts made by nineteenth century "movement intellectuals" to determine who should ultimately be held responsible for how blacks were being treated in the United States.\textsuperscript{73} Foreshadowing much of the thinking of the Prince Hall Masons, Woodson felt that if black people could "display the fruits of respectability in public," they would be able to "surmount the racist structures stacked against them."\textsuperscript{74} Woodson's emigrationist views would have considerable influence over how Delany would construct his black nationalism, and certainly had to have influenced his views about black socioeconomic class and the importance of maintaining respectability.

Martin Delany's "race pride was striking enough and his disdain for white men great enough" to cause "one acquaintance [to] proclaim, 'I do not believe Delany considers any white man as good as himself.'"\textsuperscript{75} Delany "made no attempt to hide his hostility to the oppressors of his people, one of the manifestations of which was his advocating emigrationism during the 1850s."\textsuperscript{76} As a "hero of modern black nationalists," it would seem bizarre that, as Muraskin observes, "in a most crucial sense Delany was not a radical at all, despite his pride in blackness and his apparent hostility to the white race."\textsuperscript{77} Rather "Delany's own 'true principles of morals' were not those of African peoples but rather a mirror reflection of mid-nineteenth-century Anglo-American morality."\textsuperscript{78} Nor should they have been. Muraskin's observations are further modified by Paul Gilroy's analysis of Delany's position vis-à-vis black nationalism and Africa. Gilroy insists that Delany is far too complicated "to fix him as consistently either conservative or

\textsuperscript{72} Ibid., 60.  
\textsuperscript{73} Eyerman, \textit{Cultural Trauma}, 3.  
\textsuperscript{74} Kathy Glass, \textit{Courting Communities}, 60.  
\textsuperscript{75} Muraskin, \textit{Middle-Class Blacks in a White Society}, 79.  
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{77} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid.
radical." However, he agrees with the broad assertion that Delany represented a "resolutely elitist version of black nationalism…[that] stressed the obligation of blacks to better themselves through universal values of thrift, temperance, and hard work."

Though Mary Ann Shadd, also a stern supporter of temperance, would not have been permitted within the sacred walls of the Masonic temple, she was a friend and contemporary of Martin Delany, a member of the AME church (of which Delany was also a member) and, at least in Chatham, surrounded by Masonic men, educators such as herself and leaders of the Church who all reflected these middle class ideals, even if they themselves may not have been defined as middle-class by economic standards. That there were always ready disagreements about the form black life should take in the city is certain. Take for example, the debate between Woodson and Delany concerning the role of the black church and church leadership. Woodson, a prominent leader of the AME church, felt that the role of ministers was to stress the "importance of moral responsibility" to "common blacks." Martin Delany, quite contrarily and somewhat radically, felt that, as blacks' dependence on the church as their only source of information was "an insidious evil," the church's teaching of "prayer being sufficient for all things" was misleading. This fear of "prayer being sufficient for all things" also reflects Mary Ann Shadd's apprehension concerning the ability of former slaves to understand the concept of self-reliance and independence from God or white masters. She suggested that "[i]gnorance and inexperience

81 Lorene Bridgen, "On Their Own Terms: Temperance in Southern Ontario's Black Community, 1830-1860," Ontario History 101 (2009): 1, 9; Frankie Hutton, The Early Black Press in America, 1827-1860 (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1993), x. "...the middle class to which the editors belonged was not defined by financial standing and family connections comparable to the white upper crust."  
84 Kinshasa, Emigration vs. Assimilation, 35.
of individual responsibility" may be engrained in the former slave due to the "Institution of Slavery," and that her purpose (and that of her paper) was "to improve their [former slaves] mental and moral condition, and to encourage habits of independence," a position that assumes, naturally, that those "mental and moral condition[s]" and "habits of independence," are absence by default.\textsuperscript{85}

The debates that raged within the black press in the United States were manifold, but at their heart they focused on figuring out the best "place" for blacks, free and slave alike. There were emigrationists who agreed that the only way to help blacks or fix the problems they faced in the United States was to abandon their country of birth permanently. However, even among this group, there was broad and vehement disagreement as to where the best place to emigrate would be since "some felt a return to the African continent was logical; [and] others suggested that emigration to the Caribbean, Central America or Canada would be more practical."\textsuperscript{86} There were those who wished to remain in the United States, as they saw it was their birthright; however, questions of how blacks should and should not align themselves with whites, as well as with each other vis à vis class status and personal habits, were constant sources of disagreement.

Rashey Moten offers this sweeping assessment of the black press' influence:

The fact was that the Editor had power unequalled by any other person of his race. The minister, the lawyer, the orator, might have great influence, but this was necessarily limited in its sphere. The Negro Editor, through his paper, wielded influence limited only by the extent of its circulation. Here was a weapon that pushed the editor's influence beyond the narrow confines of the local community.\textsuperscript{87}

Sociologist Kwando Kinshasa's main argument throughout his work *Emigration vs. Assimilation: The Debate in the African American Press, 1827-1861*, was that the press was "an instrument for

\textsuperscript{86} Kinshasa, *Emigration vs. Assimilation*, 1.
\textsuperscript{87} Moten as quoted in: Kinshasa, *Emigration vs. Assimilation*, 2.
social interpretation and caste domination." The function of the press was to "[articulate] the goals and interests of an elite stratum among free blacks." This is significant because it suggests that the ability of blacks to influence public representations of blackness was largely determined by privileged access points such as education and literacy. In his 1993 study of the black press from 1827 to 1860, Frankie Hutton explains that the early black press was constructed as "prisms through which to witness the thought and activities of upwardly mobile, middle-class blacks," and that "[t]he editors were elite men and pacesetters of the black middle class in their communities." Emerging from this context, Mary Ann Shadd and *The Provincial Freeman* also articulated black class interest and a desire to shape black society. As Alexander Murray observed in, "The Provincial Freeman: A New Source for the History of the Negro in Canada and the United States,"

The reasons for establishing *The Provincial Freeman* are clearly outlined in the second issue. It is claimed that there were thousands of colored people, *many of them wealthy and well-educated, who need a journal to inform them as a group*. The colored people in the United States need to know about their brothers in Canada and about conditions there, so that they can decide, on the basis of fact, whether or not to leave 'Yankeedom with disfranchisement and oppression' and settle 'in a land of impartial laws and a Constitution having no distinctions of color'.

As much as Shadd wanted to communicate with blacks in the United States, she felt strongly that the paper was needed "to make our voice heart at home'; home being Canada," and "[argued] that the forty thousand colored people of Canada could be an important and influential element in the 'body politic,' if they were kept informed on political questions which affected them as a

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89 Ibid.
91 Hutton, *The Early Black Press in America*, ix, x.
In discussing the editors' reasons for producing the *Provincial Freeman*, Murray notes the *Freeman's* motto, "Self-Reliance is the True Road to Independence," a notion that has remained part of Chatham's black imaginary. His interpretation of Shadd's motto is astute:

This [motto] typifies, in a phrase, the journal's views on its most frequently discussed subject: the merits and demerits of planned segregated settlements of Negroes as opposed to their integration into the more challenging life of existing communities. Murray found that "[a]part from an overall dislike of segregated communities," the existence of which encouraged an undesirable level of dependence, "the prosperous and better educated Negroes...were eager and able to acquire the social graces of their white peers." For the "free Negroes who had grown weary of their second-class status in the United States," establishing separate black settlement communities would be antithetical to achieving access to the rights and respectability of whites.

As a result of their class status, these editors, and those who sought them out in order to engage them in this pressing and timely debate, had 'interpretations of society [that] took on aspects of class interest, and their values and expectations mirrored assumptions which reflected dominant white concepts." These concepts were "the possibility of social mobility, the virtues of education and material gain, and the philosophy of Christian obedience." All of these factors are evident in early black Chatham's imaginary, and they most certainly are evident in the writings of Mary Ann Shadd Cary, who "used [her] paper to express her commitment to

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93 Ibid., 126.
94 Ibid.
95 Ibid., 127, 133.
98 Ibid.
integration, her criticism of self-segregated black Canadian communities, and her vision of Canada as a permanent place of settlement.”

Although a considerable number of black emigrants to Chatham may not have actively participated in these debates once they relocated to the city in the 1850s and 1860s, given the demography of the blacks in the city many were surely at least aware of these ongoing discussions. Literacy was high among blacks in Chatham. That only 72 males and 79 females were identified as being unable to read and write in 1861 suggest problems with the reporting of literacy within the census. According to Bruce Curtis, the literacy column in the census is unreliable at best. He explains that the literacy column was one of several 1861 census columns that included the "instruction 'requires no comment' [which] was often interpreted as an injunction to leave them blank.”

In addition to being left blank, the "or" in "Persons Over 20 Who Cannot Read or Write," was often mistaken for "and." As such:

The vast majority of enumerators left these columns blank, leading some historians to claim that popular literacy rates were well over 90 per cent for those enumerated, while the matter may be primarily one of recording conventions.

Nevertheless, the literacy column in the census was not completely neglected and it appears to have been filled out at least partially in the Chatham City returns. Per the census, the average ages of illiterate black men and black women living in Chatham in 1861 were 45 and 40.8 respectively. If there were 643 black individuals who were 20 years of age and older, those indicating their illiteracy equal around 23 percent of that portion of the population, 11 percent male and 12 percent women. This would suggest that the literacy rate may have been as high as 77% though conventional thinking would likely see this number as unreliably inflated due to the

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101 Ibid.
102 Ibid.
variability within the census record. However, in Black Property Owners in the South 1790-1915, Loren Schweninger claims that by "1860, the literacy rate among affluent free persons of color in the Lower South stood at 87 percent, higher than that for southern whites." As well, due to "the general commitment to education among Cincinnati's black people," Henry L. Taylor posits that the "literacy rate among Cincinnati blacks was between 60 and 70 percent during the 1840s and 1850s." Similar numbers are presented for free blacks in New Orleans (80%), and blacks in Providence, Rhode Island (97%), New York (88%), and Boston (90%).

Given that a significant proportion of Chatham's black population in the 1860s was likely made up of free blacks, and the black community's early commitment to the building and maintenance of schools in the area such factors suggest at least a middling literacy rate by mid-century.

Despite difficulties in determining the actual proportion of the literate population in Chatham at this time or the readership of The Provincial Freeman locally, it is impossible to ignore the significance of the black press. The black newspaper in the nineteenth century was a lifeline and a major political force in the United States, its influence in the then increasingly political and controversial debate about the best "place" for black people in the slave south was considerable. Where literacy was at issue,

As unreliable as statistics might have been during that period, several factors are indicated, in that there is an admittance that 57 percent of the black population in Canada West's three major cities in 1850 were literate. And while delineating free blacks from fugitive ex-slaves was difficult by 1861, we do know that the fugitive slave acts of 1850

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103 Loren Schweninger, Black Property Owners in the South, 1790-1915 (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 130.
104 Schweninger, Black Property Owners in the South, 130.
sent many *free blacks* in a panic northward to Canada. Though literacy may not be the major factor accounting for this mobility, as suggested, its importance in the process of information use for or against emigration stands firm, as the emigrants' literacy level provided easy access to information, if not social prediction. Interestingly enough, literacy levels of fugitive blacks during this period (1850-60) exceeded that of free blacks in America who chose not to emigrate.\(^{107}\)

Kinshasa's study is helpful when looking at the complexion and character of blacks in Chatham between 1850 and 1870 because it focuses on the types of debates that were framing the movements and philosophical and spiritual alignments of an increasingly vocal group of middle class blacks. It is not happenstance that Chatham was home to a number of individuals who were counted among the African-American intelligista who popularized their names within emigration circles, travelled extensively and wrote expansively on the topic. Mary Ann Shadd arrived to Chatham in 1855 and Martin Delany arrived in 1856. And while Shadd and Delany dominate the discourse due to their respective publications and scholars' resulting focus on their lives and writings, several others could be counted among this class. Dr. Anderson Ruffin Abbott, born in Canada, was the son of Virginian William R. Abbott, freeborn in 1801 and self-made "businessman and real estate broker," who made his way to Canada by way of Alabama, New Orleans, and New York.\(^{108}\) Dr. Abbott practiced medicine in Chatham in 1871. Poet James Madison Bell was freeborn in Ohio in 1826 and, becoming "indoctrinated in and involved in the anti-slavery movement," moved to Chatham in 1854.\(^{109}\) Bell worked as a plasterer in the city, and befriended John Brown.\(^{110}\) Bell was instrumental in "acquir[ing] proper educations for the children of his race" in California and desegregating schools in Toledo, Ohio.\(^{111}\) He also spent


\(^{109}\) Ibid., 15.

\(^{110}\) Ibid., 14-15.

\(^{111}\) Ibid.
time on the anti-slavery, pro-education black lecture circuit in the United States.\textsuperscript{112} World-renowned gunsmith, James Monroe Jones, was born to slave parents in North Carolina. His father, Allen Jones, "saved enough money to purchase his family's freedom, a vast sum of two thousand dollars, but was swindled out of it by his owner."\textsuperscript{113} Allen Jones, who made his side income in blacksmithing and gunsmithing, "again saved three thousand dollars and…succeeded in buying his family's freedom."\textsuperscript{114} After learning and perfecting his father's trade, James Monroe Jones moved to Chatham in 1849. His guns "won first prize for the best assortment of firearms at the Grand Provincial Exhibition at Montreal in 1860."\textsuperscript{115} Jones was also "a magistrate in Chatham in 1874, spoke several languages, and attended the John Brown Convention."\textsuperscript{116} "Gunsmith Jones"' daughter, Sophia, who was born in Chatham, would go on to study medicine at the University of Michigan and became that school's "first black female doctor in 1885."\textsuperscript{117}

These are but a few of the individuals who populated early Chatham. As we can see from their biographical sketches, these individuals were involved, even if marginally, in these ongoing debates about emigration. They constructed Canada as not simply a place of refuge and escape, but also as a place to establish a new and specifically defined vision of what it meant to be black in nineteenth century North America. This vision was one that would be built upon a foundation of independence, temperance, pride, and respectability. It was one whose ultimate goal was to prove to whites that some blacks were worthy of their respect. It insisted on character and industry over racial concerns or separatist interferences.

\textsuperscript{112} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{113} Ibid, 32.  
\textsuperscript{114} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{115} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{116} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{117} Ibid. 32.
The census suggests that Chatham attracted a particular type of individual. By looking at the families that came to Chatham throughout the late 1850s, it is possible to see a trend. This movement may not have been collective or orchestrated by black middle-class American emigrationists. However, recognizing the fact that a substantial minority (if not a numerical majority) of black adults who arrived in Chatham would have been influenced by ongoing public discussions that reflected the growing citizenship concerns of middle class American blacks evident in the black press, lecture circuits, churches and Masonic temples is essential if we are to gain a greater appreciation for the type of people that Chatham attracted. Perhaps they agreed at last that race would always be a hindrance in the United States and that Canada offered a colour-blind alternative. Perhaps they resigned themselves to the notion that upward mobility meant nothing in a country where "blacks had no rights which whites had to recognize." Finally, perhaps these individuals finally discovered that citizenship abroad was preferable to political, social, and economic exile at home.

It seems likely that there would have been some agreement or, at the very least, a shared perspective on how blackness should be moulded in light of their freedom to actually determine its shape. After all, Chatham was not an all-black settlement, in that it was not designed specifically and explicitly for the resettlement of fugitive or free blacks. The intent of many of the blacks who relocated there was to establish a particular brand of middle class blackness that would live within and among Chatham's white population, in order to demonstrate the potential of self-reliance of the race by proving that members of said race can and did survive and thrive independent of white design. Educated, fair skinned and free born, Mary Ann Shadd expressed the following sentiments in an 1857 editorial,

In the United States, in slavery, the great aim of their oppressors was to destroy confidence the one in the other – to under-value one another in their person and pursuits;
at the same times that they inculcate fear of the master, or the person of white complexity, to make him also the idol, the centre of homage, the one to be looked up to, to be clothed and fed by, although the very food to be furnished them, whether moral or other, should poison in the taking. Many in coming to Canada, have but fled from the sting, the bitterness of the dose, the direct result of the relation of master and slave, but not at all from these other evils which are as clearly concomitants of the relation.\textsuperscript{118}

An all-black settlement, dependent on a centralized association run by white benefactors, would not suit any campaign intended to prove that blacks could indeed thrive independently. Though there were certainly calls for mutual aid, certain members of Chatham's black community believed that success in Chatham, as blacks among whites, independently building personal wealth and social mobility, was the true purpose of relocation. It was not enough to "make do."

The move to Chatham was as much an opportunity for growth and change as it was a proving ground. Though "Promised Land" might be a bit melodramatic, it appears as though there was some sense that Chatham in particular held "promise" for those who had something to prove and who wished to eschew their American, accommodationist or separatist past and try an integrationist approach "Under the Lion's Paw."

\textsuperscript{118}Ripley, \textit{The Black Abolitionist Papers}, 360-361.
Conclusion:

Figure 6: An older Martha Browning (nee Duckett). She was born in Dover, Kent, Ontario between 1868 and 1870. Permission to use this image granted by B. Milburn from her personal collection.

A closer reading of primary evidence paired with an analysis of African American influences suggests the possibility of a more nuanced understanding of the complexity of black life. Analyzing the census by looking at family composition proves, in part, that black lives are knowable and are not entirely lost to time, nor should they be relegated to languish under a poorly generalized banner of "blacks in Canada" or "blacks in Chatham." The purpose of this chapter was to not only indicate that new information can be gleaned from old data, but also to counter the narrative that has tended to discuss the movement of blacks to Canada as one-
dimensional. These middle class black intellectuals came to Canada with fully established worldviews about what the future held for blacks and what an ideal blackness looked and sounded like. These individuals wielded considerable power to create meaning and consensus. They helped determine and define the costs and benefits of membership to this particular constructed identity and refused a purely racial outlook in a way that likely alienated them from the very individuals they sought to elevate.
Chapter 3:

"Masonry is not intended for the rabble:"
Prince Hall Freemasonry and the Making of a Black Community

...The black church, black educational institutions, the black Press, and in later years, black civil rights organizations may have been publicly perceived as the hegemony of black America. This perception may have been misleading, for none of the black institutions could match the quiet, determined, persistent role of leadership that came from the Masonic Lodges of Prince Hall Freemasonry; and often hidden from view and unknown by the public is the fact that the leaders of many of these institutions, were for the most part led or sustained by Prince Hall Freemasons. For instance, the founding fathers of the AME Church and...the black Press was usually owned by members of the craft.¹

The black church is commonly considered the centre of any early black community, both in Canada and the United States.² Supported by a lengthy African American church historiography, scholars writing African Canadian history have also argued that the black church was "an indispensible institution," "the oldest, most influential and stable institution in the lives of its people," as well as an institution that served a comprehensive function concerning the "spiritual needs...[and] social, recreational and educational activities of its members."³ As Paul Lawrence Dunbar notes, "historians argue it was the ideology of religious beliefs, the social organization of the black church, and the community leadership of the black minister" that

provided the structure and strength within black communities throughout the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries.\textsuperscript{4} Similarly, Dorothy Shadd Shreve, in \textit{The AfriCanadian Church: A Stabilizer} has argued that the church was "a place where [blacks] could participate with dignity, pride and freedom," and "the major source of materials on the culture, mores, music, songs, and lifestyle of AfriCanadian People."\textsuperscript{5} Viewed as the "cultural womb of the black community," it served as a social and religious centre that helped fortify its members and their families, often contributing to their broader appreciation for and understanding of their definition of community.\textsuperscript{6}

Though the black churches in Chatham, Ontario likely reflected this idealized function of the church, another organization existed that extended the influence of the church and expanded the influence of Chatham’s black elite into nearly every institution in the city. Black Freemasonry has, by virtue of its organizational discretion, evaded the attention of historians in Canada. By looking at the closely-knit brotherhood of Prince Hall Masons, St. John's Lodge #9, in Chatham, it is possible to reframe our understanding of institution and community building among blacks located in small Canadian towns. Though this study focuses exclusively on blacks in Chatham, it is significant to note that while St. John’s Lodge #9 in Chatham was one of the most stable and consistent lodges over the course of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, it was certainly not alone. The first lodges in Canada West, Mount Olive, No.1, of Hamilton, Victoria Lodge, No. 2, of Drummondville and Olive Branch, No. 3, of Windsor, were established in the early 1850s.\textsuperscript{7} Though the names and designated numbers of the lodges varied over the

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[4]{Dunbar, "Hidden in Plain Sight," 2.}
\footnotetext[5]{Dorothy Shadd Shreve, \textit{The AfriCanadian Church: A Stabilizer} (Jordan Station: Paideia Press, 1983), 13-14.}
\footnotetext[6]{Dorothy Shadd Shreve, \textit{The AfriCanadian Church: A Stabilizer}, 8.}
\footnotetext[7]{Other towns in Ontario that were home to Prince Hall Masonic lodges include, Mount Carmel Lodge, No. 18, of North Buxton, North American Lodge, No. 11, of Windsor, Prince Hall Lodge, No. 18 of Harrow, Meridian Sun, No. 13, Eureka, No. 20, Corinthian, No. 16, and Salem, No. 12, of Toronto, Mount Moriah Lodge, No. 24 of Montreal, St. Luke’s Lodge, No. 21 of St. Catharines, and Scenic City Lodge, No. 22 of Owen Sound.}
\end{footnotes}
years and membership rolls, interest, and participation ebbed at certain times during their more than 150 years of existence, the brothers of the Prince Hall Lodge were, with few exceptions, influential within their respective localities and instrumental in the production of a specific understanding of their own roles within their community. Moreover, they played a significant role in defining that community. They also created a brotherhood that extended across the province, the country, the continent and the world and was imbued with a clear class-consciousness that was emerging within the larger context of late nineteenth century fraternalism. The purpose of this chapter is to reveal the avenues of influence these Chatham men travelled. These avenues were marked by social, political and economic ambition, strict notions of respectability, morality, masculinity, and were informed by a black middle-class Masonic blueprint for upward social mobility.

First, I will begin with a description of the mixed context from which these men emerged: nineteenth century fraternalism north of the border and the creation of Prince Hall Masonry in the United States. Second, I will profile several members of the Chatham chapter in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of who these men were, what they wanted for themselves and their families, and establish the extent of their intimate kinship and friendship bonds. Lastly, I will discuss the nature of black Freemasonry in Chatham. Using the original proceedings from their yearly province-wide meetings, I will explore the nature of Masonry as understood by these men.

**Nineteenth Century Fraternalism:**

According to Andrew Holman in his study of Galt and Goderich, Ontario from 1850 to 1891, the rise in fraternalism in Ontario was due in large part to the emergence of the middle class. In this mid-century context, what one did for a living defined their class status, and it was
through organizations such as Freemasonry that men attempted to shape their middle-class identities as these types of "[v]oluntary associations were the agencies through which middle-class residents disseminated their values and defended their interests." Holman identifies fraternal organizations as one type of voluntary association that was "most central to the middle class's efforts to construct society in their image and on their terms," and provided the means by which nineteenth century Victorian values could be expressed and materialize in the day-to-day lives of these men. Fraternal organizations helped formalize an individual's class status while communicating said class status to the broader community. "Developing out of the liberal order of the late nineteenth century," it is no surprise that "the years from 1870 to 1920 constituted the high period of fraternal culture in Canada." By the end of the nineteenth century one in four men in the United States belonged to a fraternal order, and in Canada, "Toronto had twenty [lodges] by 1900, serving a population of about 200,000." 

Outside of providing delineated spaces in which to perform class identity, these groups provided an array of other social, economic, and political benefits. Todd Stubbs, in "Patriotic Masculinity and Mutual Benefit Fraternalism in Urban English Canada: The Sons of England, 1874-1900," has shown that these orders were crucial to the "forging of ethnic bonds among Englishmen," in addition to providing "temporary financial support, funeral benefits…and discount life insurance." Lynne Marks, in *Revivals and Roller Rinks: Religion, Leisure, and Identity in Late-Nineteenth Century Small-Town Ontario*, also suggests the centrality of fraternal membership to men's class and ethnic identities and reveals fraternal orders as stages upon which

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masculinity was performed and reinforced. Interestingly, though lodge members were usually culled from the "occupational middle-class," or "those who worked for a living, but not with their hands, and those who did work with their hands, but also owned the means of production," Marks shows that in certain Canadian contexts, the lodge room could just as likely be filled with working-class men wishing to better their lot through fraternal ties. Investigating the participation of black men in Freemasonry in Chatham demonstrates that they too were concerned with class distinction, ethnic bonds, socio-economic support and upward social and economic mobility. That race complicated their access to such ambitions would be an understatement. However, the eighteenth century emergence of Prince Hall Freemasonry, though contested, would succeed in providing black men in North America a path to fraternal distinction. As the following discussion suggests, black fraternalism helped redefine black masculinity and proved invaluable to the emergence of an influential North American black middle-class.

Prince Hall Masonry:

While there is some debate as to the origins of the man who introduced North American black men to the vagaries of Freemasonry, there is little doubt about Prince Hall’s immediate and profound influence on black American life in the eighteenth century and in the subsequent (and impressive) legacy of black Freemasonry in North America. The details of Prince Hall’s life are far from accurate; the date and location of his birth continue to be debated. One source claims he was born in Barbados on September 12, 1748, only to be contradicted later in the same text as having “been born in the 1730’s.” Despite this slight confusion, a particular narrative emerges from several sources that is generally accepted among scholars who have focused on this history.

14 Holman, A Sense of Their Duty, ix-x; Marks, Revivals and Roller Rinks, 108-109.
15 Arlie Robbins, Prince Hall Masonry in Ontario, 1852-1933 (Chatham: Privately Published, 1980), 5-6.
In 1775, “Prince Hall, a West Indian mulatto of free status, and fifteen other blacks were initiated by the British Army lodge stationed in Boston. From that group in 1776 came African Lodge No. 1.”\(^{16}\) The very formation of this first African-American lodge would be a topic hotly debated in North America for the next two centuries. The legitimacy of the “First Fifteen” was doubted from the outset, and all subsequent lodges and black Freemasons would be deemed illegal and clandestine for much of the Order's institutional history. The white Masonic lodges in Massachusetts rejected Prince Hall’s membership on account of his race and refused to “charter a lodge of blacks under their jurisdiction.”\(^ {17}\) After the Revolutionary War, Prince Hall sought a charter from the British Masons, which they granted in the mid-1780s.\(^ {18}\) Finally, in 1791, Prince Hall, who was also a Methodist minister, created the African Grand Lodge, which would later carry his name, and began authorizing the creation of lodges across the eastern United States.\(^ {19}\) As the first Grand Master of the new African Lodge, assigned number 459 on the “rolls of the Mother Lodge,” Prince Hall fortified black Masonry. Its legitimacy ostensibly incontestable, its members could now reap all the perceived benefits of membership and brotherhood. The deeply rooted racism and commitment to segregation in the United States, however, would temper this optimism of colour-blind brotherhood, as white Masons across North America began a steady campaign to disavow black Masonry in its entirety. This denial is significant because the question of black Masonic legitimacy would preoccupy, distract, and spiritually undermine Prince Hall Lodges for the next 200 years.

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\(^{17}\) Muraskin, *Middle-Class Blacks in a White Society*, 33.


Prince Hall believed that access to education and black participation in government would open the world up to blacks while simultaneously proving their equality to whites. As a result of his beliefs, he worked to advance citizenship for blacks in the United States and fought for “equality in the eyes of the law for all.” He established a school for black children in 1796. Believing in the rule of law, “Hall became a primary spokesperson for Boston’s Black community…led his fellow lodgers in repeatedly sending petitions to the government of Massachusetts asking for the abolition of slavery [and] petitioned the state legislature for repatriation back to Africa” in the event that whites were unwilling to accept blacks as equal citizens. The central tenets of Prince Hall Masonry reflect Prince Hall’s intense belief that masculine respectability and hard work were to be central in the campaign to earn white recognition of African-American equality.

“Real Worth and Personal merit” were the paths to race advancement, and men wishing to join the ranks of the order were required to have “a tongue of Good Reporte”. Here, Hall insisted that a clean reputation and proper conduct were the prerequisites of respectability, a notion that would be strictly maintained by subsequent lodges and reiterated at each Grand Lodge meeting into the twentieth century. He saw black Masonry as a vehicle to black self-improvement that would carve inroads into the black community, providing its members with the tools needed to support any demands for equality.

21 Ibid.
Black Freemasonry in Canada:

Figure 7: Cover page of the "Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Annual Communications of the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge," 1875, 1876. Permission to use this image granted by J. Robinson from his personal collection.
In step with the proliferation of fraternalism in Ontario in the latter part of the nineteenth century, in 1872 a meeting was held in the city of Chatham in order to organize a separate Grand Lodge for the Province of Ontario. The committee established to seek this appeal of independence included Chatham residents Isaac Holden, Henry Weaver, J.C. Wilmore, J.F. Scott, and Nathaniel Murray. On October 22, 1872, the Prince Hall Lodges in Ontario were released from the “American Mother Grand Lodges” and were free to reorganize independently. Henry Weaver, Isaac Holden, Carl Henderson, Nelson Robinson, Philip Hackett, E.C. Cooper, Littleton Johnson, J.F. Scott, and A.C. Pinckney were among the members of Chatham’s St. John’s Lodge present at this meeting. Isaac Holden was the first Grand Master of the Lodge, elected in 1874. A visible member of Chatham’s black elite, Isaac Holden was a close acquaintance of Archibald McKellar, an influential member of Chatham’s white political community, and served as a local MP. Holden was also present at the John Brown Convention, held in Chatham to discuss the raid on Harper’s Ferry.

25 Ibid., 42.
26 Ibid., 43.
27 Ibid.
28 Ibid., 50.
29 Ibid.
In one of his first Grand Master Addresses to the *Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of the Most Ancient and Honorable Fraternity of Free and Accepted Masons of the Province of Ontario*, held in Hamilton in 1875, Holden expressed the challenges the lodge faced due to dwindling numbers and resultant financial crisis. The reorganization of the Ontario Lodge, according to Isaac Holden, caused “some confusion among the craft,” which was evident during his
mandatory Grand Master’s visits to subordinate lodges to oversee their progress.\(^{30}\) His report found Lincoln Lodge No. 8 in Amherstburg struggling upon his visit, but it assured the brothers that the situation was ameliorating.\(^{31}\) Foreshadowing the vitality of St. John’s Lodge in Chatham, Holden claimed that upon his visit he “found everything in a healthy and otherwise satisfactory condition, and her [the Lodge’s] growth in membership was more than one could expect.”\(^{32}\) He also found that the Chatham members were productive and enthusiastic enough to “[organize] a Commandery K.T. [Knights Templar].”\(^{33}\) Chatham’s lodge had more members than any other in 1875, 39 total compared to 31 in Hamilton, 38 in Windsor and 23 in Dresden.\(^{34}\) Holden mentions that though they were active, attendance was an issue as the lodge was “composed of farmers” whose leisure time was likely as limited as their desire to travel mud roads to weekly meetings.\(^{35}\)

\(^{30}\) *Proceedings of the Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Annual Communications of the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of the Most Ancient and Honorable Fraternity of Free and Accepted Masons of the Province of Ontario, Dominion of Canada, Hamilton, June 23, 24, 25 and 26, 1875, and at Chatham, June 21, 22, 23, 1876* (Detroit: WM Graham’s Steam Press, 1877), 5.

\(^{31}\) *Proceedings*, 1875-1876, 6.

\(^{32}\) Ibid.

\(^{33}\) Ibid.

\(^{34}\) See Appendix 1.1. It is likely that Dresden’s numbers might have been higher were it not for its rural location.

\(^{35}\) *Proceedings*, 1875-1876, 6.
The number of titles and committees within the lodge spoke to the importance of teaching (and learning) formal process, decorum and status, which were the foundations of its orderly institution building. Many of these titles and committees were held and filled by various members simultaneously, as their number often exceeded the number of lodge members at any given time. In total, there were 19 different lodge titles, which included Grand Master, Deputy Grand Master, Grand Senior Warden, Grand Master of Ceremonies and Grand Sword Bearer,
and no fewer than 15 different lodge committees such as the Jurisprudence Committee, the
Grievance Committee and Condolence Committee.\(^{36}\)

The Proceedings from the Grand Lodge indicate, above all else, a consummate adherence
to formal procedure. Each meeting was called to order at a predetermined time, followed by the
formal “opening” of the lodge meeting by the “Most Worthy Grand Master” who called the
lodges represented in order to determine whether they met the constitutional number to provide a
quorum for the proceedings. Once a quorum was met, a prayer by the Grand Chaplain was given,
at which point the proceeding was opened “in due form for the despatch [sic] of business” by the
Grand Master.\(^{37}\) The offices of the proceedings were called and filled. At that point, the
Committee of Credentials reported. Calling the lodges and lodge members present, the Grand
Master then called the members of the various committees; the minutes from the last proceedings
were read, and were ordered to be printed and distributed among the members.

The next phase of the meeting of the Order was the Grand Master’s Address, one that
reflected the concerns of the day and the teachings and/or philosophies of the brotherhood; it was
a common feature of all of the Grand Lodge Proceedings. It was the Grand Master’s job to
provide reports on the progress and activities of the subordinate lodges. As such, the Grand
Master was required to visit the lodges within the Province each calendar year to determine their
health and to determine their adherence to the laws of the Craft. These visits, and the role of the
Grand Master, helped to foster fraternity among various lodges. In his travels, activities, and
observations, he tied the lodges together over the course of each year. Given the financial burden
of travel for the brothers and the distances between the lodges, the visits of the Grand Master

\(^{36}\)For complete list, see: Lodge Titles and Committees, see Appendix 1.1.
\(^{37}\)Proceedings of the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of the Most Honorable and Ancient Fraternity Free and
Accepted Masons of the Province of Ontario Held at Chatham, Ont., June 15, 1892, Windsor, Ont., June 21, 1893
Being the Twentieth and Twenty-first Annual Communications (Chatham: Planet Printing and Publishing House,
1893), 3.
filled an important communication gap during those years where subordinate lodges could not meet casually for other social occasions. The Grand Master’s address included his personal message, reported on the “Condition of the Craft”, which reported the status of the Grand Lodges’ foreign relations, and there were always a few (or more) words spoken in memory of the “Fraternal Dead”, or those brothers who had “gone to glory” (died) over the course of the past year. The Grand Master then listed his “Official Acts” for the preceding year; these often included dispensations for membership dues or new lodges and other organizational matters. Deputy and District Deputies reported the “condition of Freemasonry” in their respective districts.38

Held over several days, these yearly conventions of the Grand Lodge were conducted with near-military precision. Following the proper procedures of the Lodge appears in many of their documents to be as, if not more, important than the function of the Lodge itself. In 1892, the Grand Master expressed dismay that “the explanation of the symbolism of our order is more or less omitted,” and that the “Ritual should be more fully exemplified.” This included (though was likely not limited to):

the opening and closing of lodges and conferring the three degrees as acknowledged by our Grand Lodge. Every master should have a correct knowledge of the work, preparation of candidates, the examination of visitors, the reception of distinguished visitors, the disposal of ordinary business, work and instructions.39

These lodges and their proceedings were so orderly that they required a committee and a titled officer to oversee the minute-by-minute progression of each meeting. For example, the role of

38 The districts are described in the Proceedings of the Most Worshipful grand Lodge of the Most Honorable and Ancient Fraternity Free and Accepted Masons of the Province on Ontario, Chatham, Ont. June 21, 1894, Dresden, Ont. June 21, 1895 (Chatham: Planet Printing and Publishing House, 1896 [1895], 42-43, as follows: Eastern District: “All that part of the Province lying east of a supposed line running north and south parallel to the easterly limit of the County of Middlesex. Middle District: All that part of the Province lying west of the above mentioned line, and east of a supposed line running north and south and parallel to the easterly limit of the County of Essex. Westerly district: All that part of the Province lying west of a line running north and south and parallel to the easterly limit of the County of Essex.”

39 Proceedings, 1892-1893, 11-12.
the Junior Grand Warden was to call time and keep the proceedings in line with the schedule that was predetermined by “a committee appointed to fix hours for holding of sessions of this annual communication.”\textsuperscript{40} The Junior Grand Warden calls “the Grand Lodge to labor” and “from labor to refreshment” alternately over the course of the entire proceeding.\textsuperscript{41}

It was only at this point in the proceedings that the exhaustive list of committees reported. The Works and Returns Committee report the memberships of the lodges and the payment of dues. Membership data had to include information concerning existing members, members newly initiated and/or raised, members demitted, suspended, expelled, and members who had died in the preceding year. The Grand Treasurer reported the income from the lodges and expenditures for the year, the Grand Secretary reported on logistical matters concerning the printing of minutes and distribution of constitutions to subordinate lodges, the receipt of lodge returns, and made suggestions concerning increasing the efficiency of the Prince Hall offices. The Committee of Jurisprudence was responsible for the by-laws of the subordinate lodges and the Grievance Committee dealt with the official filing of grievances against members accused of “un-masonic conduct.” The Grievance Committee was charged with determining the verity of a charge against a member and/or evaluating the trial procedure of the subordinate lodges, meting out punishment, and the hearing, denial, and granting of the appeals of the accused.

The subordinate lodges shared the privilege of hosting these elaborate meetings of the Grand Lodge. This suggests that, at least for a good number of the members, the opportunity for Province-wide travel was required and, in the case of the Grand Master, it was a necessary part of his official role. Even if travel was not possible for all members, it was the role of the Committee of Foreign Correspondence to connect the Ontario brotherhood of Prince Hall

\textsuperscript{40}Ibid., 9.
\textsuperscript{41}Ibid., 10.
Freemasons with their international brethren. At each meeting this committee would present a report that collated the annual proceedings from lodges across the globe. The American states appearing in many of these reports ranged from Florida to Iowa, Michigan to Mississippi. Though not always consistently, Ontario’s Prince Hall Grand Lodge received reports and correspondence from a number of disparate locations such as Liberia, Germany, and Argentina. From these proceedings they were able to hear how the other lodges were progressing, what activities they participated in, what troubles they were facing, and how they interpreted and practiced the Craft.

The Annual Communications ended with a report from each subordinate lodge within the jurisdiction, which included a listing of their local activities and good works, news about members and membership, festivities and challenges they faced over the course of the last calendar year. After each subordinate lodge reported in turn, the election of officers would take place where each title and committee would be voted upon and filled for the ensuing year.

It is important to note that these gentlemen took their organization very seriously. After reading these proceedings, one is left with the impression that these men were completely devoted to honoring the Craft by respecting the procedures and the rituals they were entrusted to maintain. Honouring the ancient traditions, however, was simply one aspect of membership to this fraternal order. For the men of Chatham's Prince Hall Lodge, membership also provided access to a brotherhood that would impact their lives both within, and outside of, the lodge hall.

Profiles of Chatham’s Black Masonic Order:

The relationships forged within the brotherhood created quite literal familial bonds. The importance of Masonic membership extended into the day-to-day lives of Chatham’s black men,
their families and the community. In their desire to separate themselves from the “rabble,” these men formed kinship ties that extended far beyond the their participation in the Prince Hall Lodge. The “return of lodges” during these early years shows a remarkable consistency regarding the membership. Counted among the Chatham “regulars” were Isaac Holden, Stanton Hunton, Henry Weaver, James C. Richards, Josiah F. Scott, Nathaniel Murray, and James C. Wilmore. By surveying the lives of these early members, a remarkable picture emerges that reflects the overlapping and truly cohesive world these men not only lived in, but also created.

Isaac Holden served as Grand Master of the Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge of the Province of Ontario and Jurisdiction from 1874-1879, and again from 1879-1881. Born in Mississippi between 1827 and 1830, Holden was married to Josephine Walden, who bore him two children, Sarah Isabella and William. He arrived in Chatham in 1852 and the 1861 and 1871 censuses list Holden as a carpenter and “Carpenter+Joiner” respectively. Part owner of the Grandison Boyd Block in Chatham, by 1891 Holden owned his own store and was listed as “Retail/Grocer.” He is further labeled “Merchant” on his certificate of death. Josephine, who was also born in the United States in 1838, worked as a seamstress. As women in the early census records were rarely given any occupational designation, the fact that Josephine had an occupation listed suggests that she did indeed work in paid labour as a seamstress and wished to be designated as such. Her income must have contributed considerably to an already substantial family economy. The 1861 census shows that the Holdens lived in a two-story brick home, a standout for its time for blacks and whites alike who lived in Chatham at the time. Holden also served as “fire chief of Hall #3, and was a member of the Chatham City Council for three years.”

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The Holdens had enough disposable income in 1861 to employ a West Indian live-in housekeeper, Johanna Waldron (born in 1797), who was again listed as a member of the Holden household in 1871 at the age of 75 years. The 1861, 1871, and 1891 censuses show that the Holdens lived next door to the James C. Richards, Martin Delaney, Lyman Lyons and the Walter Hawkins’ households, further indicating the extent to which these Masonic brothers lived in a tightly-knit neighborhood: the census page is quite literally a who’s who of upper echelon blacks (and Masons) on the east end of the city. These men were not only connected by geographic proximity as neighbours, for they would also come to be bound by marriage and kinship ties. Stanton Hunton was born a slave in Virginia in 1808. He “was surreptitiously educated by the Virginia woman who owned him, and though he had made several attempts to escape slavery, it wasn’t until 1840 that he was able to buy his freedom.”43 By 1848 he had made his way to Chatham by way of Ohio, where he had met his future wife, Mary Ann Conyers, a free black.44 As a Mason and one of Chatham’s prominent black businessmen, Hunton was very much involved in Chatham’s black community, was well connected and played a leading role in John Brown's 1858 visit. Listed in the 1851 census as a carpenter, but also known as a brickmason, Stanton Hunton and his wife Mary A, Hunton (who was 21 years his junior) were, by 1871, the parents of nine children, Benjamin, 19; Stanton, 17 (also listed as a carpenter), Augustus, 15; Victoria, 14; George, 12; Philip, 8; William, 7; Mary, 5; and Robert, 2. By 1881, Hunton was listed as a widower, caring for seven of his children who were still at home, and he never remarried. However, in the previous year, on December 27 1880, fraternal bonds would evolve into familial bonds as Stanton Hunton’s eldest son Benjamin married Isaac Holden’s daughter Sarah Isabella.

44 Von Eschen, Race Against Empire, 57.
Another prominent Mason, Henry Weaver, served as Grand Master of the Prince Hall Lodge from 1887-1892. He and his wife Rebecca were born in the United States, Henry sometime
between 1831-1834, and Rebecca in 1826.45 Their daughter Caroline was born in 1855, also in the United States. In 1862, the Weaver family arrived in Canada and Henry was naturalized in 1865.46 In the 1871 census, Henry Weaver was listed as a “Produce Dealer” and Rebecca was listed as a “Dressmaker.”47 The couple saved their income and eventually bought "the building that had once housed the Duke Hotel and set it up as a grocery and hostelry. Henry added a smokehouse in the rear of the building, and was soon renown as [sic] [the] maker of the best smoked hams in Chatham."48 Rebecca ran the second storey of the building, which brought in even more income as a rooming house for travellers.49 Contributing even further to the family economy, Rebecca also served meals to guests who rented rooms in the building.50

By 1881, Henry Weaver was a Constable. He was elected Alderman from 1891 to 1893 and again from 1895 to 1898 and had become the owner and operator of “Grocer Retail” business, boasting one employee.51 In 1901 Weaver's income was $1000 a year from his main occupation; he made another $1500 from extra earnings.52 According to the Canadian Human Rights Commission, as of January 1, 1900, the “average yearly wage for production workers” in Canada was $375 [and] the average annual income for “office and supervisory employees” was $846.53 Clearly the Weaver’s household income was very much above the national average; it certainly exceeded the local average. By 1901, Rebecca Weaver was not listed as working, which could either have been an error of presumption on the part of the census taker or an

45 Rebecca is alternately known throughout the census as Annie R. Weaver, Anna R. Weaver, Annie Rebecca Weaver, and Rebecca Weaver.
46 1901 Census.
47 1871 Census.
50 “Profile, Henry Weaver.”
51 Robbins, Prince Hall Masonry, 70.
52 1911 Census of Canada. Extra earnings were undefined in the census, but it may be likely the extra income came from the rooming house Rebecca operated on the second storey of the building.
indication that Henry was doing well enough that his wife no longer had to sew in order to contribute to the family’s finances.

Tragedy struck the Weaver household on November 9, 1905. Identified as Anna Rebecca Weaver on her Kent County Death Certificate, Rebecca Weaver died at home on Park St., Chatham, Ontario, from “consumption of the bowels.” Henry Weaver was listed as the informant for his wife’s death. Single for 5 years, Henry Weaver remarried in 1910 at 80 years of age, and continued to be listed as a “Merchant”, which indicates that he likely maintained an active presence his store. His new wife, Delphina Campbell, a 60-year-old widow, had previously lived in the nearby Township of Camden. The Masonic association was again important as James C. Richards, a prominent member of the Masonic Lodge, and pastor of the British Episcopal Methodist church in Chatham, officiated at Henry Weaver’s wedding on July 14, 1910. Unlike earlier census data, the 1911 census lists the addresses of the inhabitants; from this we find that the Weavers lived at 345 Park St. East, Chatham. James C. Richards lived at 378 Park St., making him not only a Masonic brother and marriage officiator, but also a close neighbour to the Weaver family.

James C. Richards began his Masonic career in the late nineteenth century; he became the Grand Secretary of the Grand Lodge in 1890, and served as Grand Master from 1900 to 1925, one of the longest tenures to date. He was a prominent member of Chatham’s black community, serving as the pastor of the British Methodist Church in Chatham and the Union Baptist Church on the 7th Concession, Chatham Township until 1925, when he met an “untimely death.” Born in the United States in 1858, Richards immigrated to Canada in 1883 and was naturalized in

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54 Schedule C-Deaths, County of Kent, Division of City of Chatham, 261. The death certificate identifies her birthplace as Philadelphia, PA, and her occupation as “housewife.”
56"James C. Richards," Maple Leaf & St. Anthony’s African-Canadian Cemetery Tour.
1896.\textsuperscript{57} In 1885 he married Mary Levere, who was born in Ontario in 1865. Charles Levere and Ida Hollensworth, both of Chatham witnessed the Richards’ marriage.\textsuperscript{58}

These marriage witnesses illustrate the scope of the Masonic and familial associations between members of Chatham’s black community, as Ida Hollensworth was the second wife of Nathaniel Murray, another prominent member of Chatham’s St. John’s Lodge. On October 21, 1877, Murray married Hollensworth, (who had immigrated from Philadelphia), on October 21, 1877 at the Hollensworth residence in Dresden, Ontario.\textsuperscript{59} Nathaniel Murray was born in 1839 to Samuel and Sarah Murray.\textsuperscript{60} The 1911 Census of Canada for Chatham City indicates that Murray immigrated in 1865, was naturalized in 1868, and worked as a plasterer in Chatham, though other records claim he worked as a cobbler.\textsuperscript{61} While married to Susan Hawkins, Nathaniel “established a shoe store, crockery and furniture store.”\textsuperscript{62} At the time of Susan Hawkins’ death in 1874, Nathaniel Murray had purchased what came to be known as the “Murray Block” on King St. in Chatham.

\textsuperscript{57} 1901 Census, 1, District # 76 Kent, S. District B. Chatham City.
\textsuperscript{58} Schedule B, Marriages.
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{60} Nathaniel Murray," \textit{Maple Leaf & St. Anthony’s African-Canadian Cemetery Tour: Chatham-Kent Black Historical Society A Final Stop on the Underground Railroad}, nd. np.
\textsuperscript{61} Gwendolyn Robinson and John Robinson, \textit{Seek the Truth: A Story of Chatham's Black Community} (Chatham: Privately Published, 1989), 60.
\textsuperscript{62} Nathaniel Murray," \textit{Maple Leaf & St. Anthony’s African-Canadian Cemetery Tour}. 
Figure 11: Nathaniel Murray, 1931. Chatham-Kent Black Historical Society.
Like many others in this era, Chatham’s downtown area was dominated by large brick buildings named for their owners. Several of whom could be counted among Chatham’s black elite. The Charity Block, owned by James H. Charity, was located on the corner of King St. and Adelaide, which was the home of the Provincial Freeman, and the Boyd Block, a mill and three story warehouse located on Third Street by the Third Street bridge, was owned by Grandison Boyd and Isaac Holden. Though the original owners operated their own businesses within these buildings, “subordinate businesses would lease corners and upper floors.”\(^6\) Nathaniel Murray “actually occupied most of the block with his own business. Along with his shoe store, crockery and furniture concerns, he added one of the most popular china and crystal shops in the county.”\(^6\) Unfortunately, despite his prominence in the city, Murray's fortunes would turn on account of racist exclusion. As recounted by Gwendolyn Robinson, who interviewed Ida Murray Burks, a descendant of Nathaniel Murray:

I interviewed Mrs. Burks in her home in Toledo Ohio. The fine furniture, china, crystal, and collectibles in the home, many of which came from the Murray Mansion located on King St. E. in Chatham, showed the affluency [sic] of the family in the area. Nathaniel was heartbroken at the death of his second wife. He eventually lost his business as a result of being ostracized by white jobbers who advised suppliers not to sell to Murray, thus diminishing his ability to trade.\(^6\)

Apparently the benefits of Masonic membership were not always enough to limit the impact of racist practices in the city.

The Masonic brotherhood in Chatham was much larger than these profiles suggest; however, it is important to note that many of these men, using their occupational status, political influence, and economic means, helped determine the character of Chatham's black community.

For example, James C. Wilmore, who was born in Pennsylvania in 1832, served in the U.S.

\(^6\)Ibid.
\(^6\)Ibid.
\(^6\)Robinson, Seek the Truth, 61.
Colored Troops Military Service between 1864 and 1865, was a charter member of the Woodstock Industrial Institute, helped established Chatham's African United Methodist Church (AUMP). The school's founders also included fellow Masons Isaac Holden and Benjamin Stewart. Wilmore was ordained as a Bishop of that church, all while serving as a St. John's Lodge's Worshipful Master in 1875 and Grand Master in 1897. Given the relatively small size of Chatham's black population, the fact that five of the 15 Prince Hall Grand Masters of Ontario between the years 1865 and 1925 were elected from Chatham's St. John's Lodge suggests their membership disproportionately represented the requisite qualities of a Prince Hall Freemason. As revealed in the next section, this was no small feat. The prescriptive expectations of what makes a man a Prince Hall Mason were restrictive and reflected an investment in institutional mores, strict adherence to middle-class ideals, and a commitment to gendered codes of conduct.

Figure 12: Bishop J. C. Wilmore, date unknown. Chatham-Kent Black Historical Society.
By looking exclusively at the Grand Master Addresses to the Grand Lodge during their Annual Communications from 1872-1909, we can better understand how the Prince Hall Masons experience can be explained in part by looking at how they understood their importance as an institution, their role within the black community, and how they defined their own masculine ideals. Themes common to all of these concerns include, but are not limited to, notions of respectability (both internally and externally defined), religious belief and morality, and obedience to the Order and its campaign for black progress. These issues were central to a Mason’s identity and they worked together to reflect the influential race-specific moral, class, and gender ideologies of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

**Importance of Institution:**

A lot was expected of a man who chose to become a Mason; acceptance into the Order was predicated on a commitment to assist in the perfecting of each man in the image of the Order itself. No short order, a Mason was expected to be “an exemplar of brotherly love, relief and truth of prudence, temperance, fortitude and justice, of secrecy, fidelity and obedience, of faith, hope and charity, and every social and moral virtue.” Masonry was designed on the “foundation and copes-stones [of] the fatherhood of God, and the brotherhood of man,” for the purpose of the “amelioration of humanity, and the glory of the Great Architect of the Universe.” The relationship between a man and Masonry was reciprocal and viewed as mutually beneficial in ideal circumstances. A man devoted himself to the Order, took an oath, and was therefore required to act in accordance with the moral, religious, civic, social, and charitable dictates of the Order. Whether or not this measured and thoughtful behaviour was

67*Grand Master's Address*, 1924, (Copy: Privately held), 8.
68*Grand Master's Address*, 1924, 8.
possible at all times is debatable. However, Prince Hall Freemasonry argued that men who chose to follow these rules fortified the Order, and they were expected to embody the belief that “Masonry is the love of truth and humanity...hope and...progress.” Masonry’s very existence was dependent on the conduct of its members, the Order also being defined by “the uprightness of [its members’] lives and [their] universal charity and brotherly love.” As stated by one Grand Master in 1894: “I am a Mason, and my daily conduct is the highest proof of the evidence.”

Elevating the Order was of utmost interest to the Masonic brothers and the Order was revered, explicitly, as a near religious institution. It would often be compared with the church itself. For example, according to Grand Master J.C. Richards: “Masonry is a grand institution, it is like the Church of God, it has withstood the ravages of time, kingdoms and empires have risen since the advent of Free Masonry.” Masonry was viewed as timeless and imperishable; as early as 1881 they were congratulating themselves for having survived the “vicissitudes incidental to society organizations, through twenty-five years...though oppressed by poverty, caste prejudice and other opposition.” Thinking Masonry to be older than the church and able to withstand all depredations, these men believed that Masonry was:

the most ancient and honorable institution that is known among men, and has waded through many oppositions and bitter persecutions; but it still lives, while every other

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70Ibid.
71Ibid.
73*Proceedings of the Seventh, Eighth and Ninth Annual Communications of the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of the Most Ancient and Honorable Fraternity of Free and Accepted Masons of the Province of Ontario, Dominion of Canada Held at Chatham, June 18, 19 and 20, 1879, Chatham, June 12, 13 and 14, 1880, Hamilton, June 8, 9 and 10, 1881* (Detroit: WM. Graham, Printer, 1881), 24.
institution, with the exception of the Church of Christ, that has been in existence has failed more or less.”

Referred alternately as “the handmaid of the Church of God” and the “handmaiden of the church” in their yearly communications, Masonry, as these men understood it, “becomes a part of religion because it teaches faith in God, hope in glorious immortality and charity to all mankind.” No mere allusion, the Masonic Order was worthy of religious reverence, though by using careful language the brothers were wise not to conflate it with the actual Christian Church. The following description of Masonry, given by the Grand Master, George H. Hughes, in 1894, warrants inclusion for the vastness of its tone:

“When the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters; when the Great Jehovah ordained the creation of the world; when the first sun rose to greet with its beams the new morning and the august command was uttered [sic], “Let there be light,” the lips of Deity breathed Masonry into existence, and it must and shall be forever-more; for truth is eternal, and the principles of truth is the foundation of Masonry; but as an organization we dare not trace it back farther than the building of King Solomon’s temple.”

There is no question that the brothers believed that God created the Order, in the image he so chose, and they accepted the responsibility to care for it and “to advance and build up the cause of Masonry—an institution so ancient, time-honored and useful.”

Belief in God, which had to be verified by oath, was a necessary prerequisite to membership (one that would also certainly help in stemming accusations of religious blasphemy and/or sacrilege). It is likely that even outside of the confines of the Masonic Hall, church attendance within the community was expected. Lynne Marks suggests in her discussion of the role of the church in late nineteenth century Ontario that not only were middle-class families

75 Proceedings, 1902-1905, 6.
77 Sixth Annual Communication, 1878, Hall of Mt. Moriah Lodge, Union Block (Dresden, June 19th, 1878), 6.
more likely to attend church than working-class families, but that church attendance was central to "defining respectability," which was needed to demonstrate adherence to the Victorian ideal of a Christian family headed by male provider and maintained by a pious mother. For men, church attendance was one way to demonstrate his role as provider; "the head of household reinforced his respectability by being seen in the family pew on Sundays, [and] what he heard there was intended to strengthen his commitment to the role of family breadwinner." It would seem that church attendance took on an even greater symbolic meaning for these men, considering the prevalence of negative stereotypes of black men as either lazy, poor, and emasculated or absent fathers. If the goal were respectability, being counted among the flock every Sunday would have been a very public way of demonstrating their suitability as "Christian gentlemen.

As well, given that in Chatham a number of reverends and pastors were counted among its members, a Masonic brother’s absence in his Sunday pew would be damningly conspicuous. The Masonic understanding of faith in the Order reflects a deep religiosity, Christian in nature, albeit quite distinct as “not [being] the narrow religion of sect or creed, but that broad religion which teaches thou shalt have no other Gods before me.”

Gaining widespread acceptance for the black race on the part of whites was also a major goal of Prince Hall Masonry. Prince Hall Masons believed that the structure and teachings of the Order would best prepare black men to be worthy representations of the race to the white and black masses. In his Annual Address, Grand Master Benjamin Stewart in 1873 informed his fellow Masons of their proper duties as members of the brotherhood; that they must “make the institution profitable to its members and to gain the good-will of the public”, and by doing so

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79 Marks, Revivals and Roller Rinks, 27, 30-33, 35.
80 Ibid., 32.
81 Ibid., 3.
82 Grand Master's Address, 1924, 8.
they would undoubtedly “demand respect from those who are outside of the pale of society.”  

The desire for acceptance required personal improvements that were profound enough to be noticed superficially. This would, a Mason hoped, raise the overall profile of the Order and make evident its inherent value to humanity. Theirs was a brotherhood that would usher in a “consummation of the Brotherhood of Man,” and this “Brotherhood” was understood as ALL men, regardless of race. 

Part of the enthusiasm among black Masons for the Order stemmed from one of its foundational tenets that held that race, caste, and creed did not exist within the Order, a rarity among Canadian and American clubs and social organizations in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Masonic "slogan of 'no creed but the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man'," is echoed in a passage from Chalmers Izett Patton's book entitled *Freemasonry: Its Symbolism, Religious Nature, and Law of Perfection*, published in 1873:  

> Not a little difficulty has arisen in some Lodges from the diversity of creed allowed in the Masonic Brotherhood. The liberality shown in this respect, however, is certainly one of the excellencies of Freemasonry. It aims at binding men together in a common brotherhood, notwithstanding all diversities of creed as well as of nationality, for mutual sympathy, kindly fellowship, and support; and all that is required is that they stand upon the common ground of believing in God…

As racism dictated that blacks live separately from whites in as many ways (and within as many institutions) as possible, Masonry at its very foundation optimistically proclaimed an equality of membership. The notion that this type of colour-blind brotherhood could be possible created a good deal of stubborn sanguinity among Prince Hall Masons; it was abundantly clear within the text of their Annual Communications that they truly believed that Masonry provided the

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83 *Proceedings*, 1873-1874, 7.  
84 *Proceedings*, 1875-1876, 51.  
immediate institutional foundation needed for future admission into the white world. The optimism in the following passage, read by the Grand Master in 1877 is as absolute in its purview as it is naïve in hindsight:

I have for the past year engaged my mind with Masonry, particularly among colored people, and...I am convinced that the great work is rapidly on the increase, both in usefulness and fraternity, it is keeping even pace and tending with the rest of the enlightened world,... and from present indications the day is not far distant when the disaffection that has so long disturbed the greeting between our white and colored brethren throughout the world will soon disappear, and soon the colored brother will be transfixed and firmly established in the fraternal affections of the great Masonic family throughout the civilized world..."86

There certainly may have been some hope that blacks and whites could benefit from “fraternal affections” outside of the Order; however, the spirit of this statement existed entirely within the context of the Lodge. The Lodge, in their view, had the potential to disprove the impossibility of racial harmony. It could, if it kept true to its foundational dictates, provide an institutional example of black and white cooperation, mutual aid and mutual respect. The reverence for the Order was in part based on this profound optimism that it could usher in an ordered and highly respectable platform that would foster racial tolerance and initiate the healing of historical wounds. It was without question that “[t]he design of masonry [was] to bring men to recognize and accept the doctrine [sic] of the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of man,” and that this Brotherhood was understood to have been made by one God “out of one blood,” and that even “in the final analysis it is one blood whether Ethiopian [sic], Maylay, or Saxon veins.” This was viewed as the fundamental “creed of masonry.”87

In 1894, at the close of his Annual Address, Grand Master George H. Hughes summarized the purpose of Masonry and the role of the Mason: “brethren in conclusion let me admonish you to be careful in your deliberations, for we are making history for the future. Let us

86Proceedings, 1875-1876, 51.
87Proceedings, 1909, 36.
be temperate, prudent and discreet that the future generations of our race may be benefitted by our labors in this noble cause of Free Mason.”

Masons understood their role as groomers of young men, representatives of the race, caretakers of widows and children, endowed with the love and purpose of a devout Christian faith. They believed that, through right acts and hard work, they would undermine the negative perception of black manhood.

**Roles and Responsibilities:**

**Education**

Even though a large part of a Mason’s efforts were focused on perfecting his own character, his ultimate goal was to ameliorate society and advance the race. Being that “Freemasonry [was viewed as] a veritable gospel of peace, charity, loyalty and goodwill,” its responsibility was to provide guidance to those who needed an ideal of black manhood to admire and emulate. It was the Order’s purpose to convey, through their members' comportment, dress, manners, diction and education, their members' respectable status and throw doubt upon white claims of black inferiority. As an 1892 address makes clear, it was important for members of the Order to carry themselves honorably “whether in the Grand Lodge or in the street”, so that “wherever we may be or whoever we may meet will be compelled to acknowledge us as gentlemen, law abiding citizens, and good masons.”

Their desire to set themselves apart from the "average black man," while setting a shining example of worthy black manhood, was fraught with challenges. These men emerged from an historical context where "[i]t was pragmatic for free and newly freed blacks to carry themselves...

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88Proceedings, 1894-1895, 10.
89Grand Master's Address, 1924, 8.
90Proceedings, 1892-1893, 4-5.
as differently as possible from those still enslaved."\(^91\) They were living in a world that had harnessed racial Darwinism in order to explain the failure of blacks to thrive in post-emancipation America, but also one that grew increasingly violent in the form of the restrictive Jim Crow laws being introduced at the turn of the century.\(^92\) The Victorian image of the ideal man, as provider, protector, and embodiment of self-determination, involved qualities that black men could not readily access in the post-Civil War world. As slaves who could not protect their wives and children, as free men called "boy" or "uncle" as a matter of custom and regardless of status, and as victims of racist economic disenfranchisement which thwarted their capacity to provide for themselves and their families, black men at the turn of the century had suffered real damage where questions of masculinity and self-image were concerned.\(^93\) It is no wonder then, that black middle-class men campaigned in numerous ways to elevate their status and create distance between themselves and blacks who they viewed as representing the worst aspects of damaged black manhood. In keeping with the early twentieth century vision of "the Talented Tenth," those educated and upwardly mobile African Americans who were "charged with guiding the masses of freedmen through the post-Reconstruction years," these men, armed with


\(^93\) Chris Dixon, *Perfecting the Family: Antislavery Marriages in Nineteenth-Century America,* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997), 171. "Inferring that the destruction of the slaves' masculinity was one of the most ruinous effects of slavery, African American men's concern for their masculine self-image owed much to the sexual and domestic abuses that occurred under slavery. Besides being unable to protect their wives from the wanton desires of white slave owners, African American men could not properly fulfill their role as fathers, since their children, as well as their wives, were the property of white men. This inability to render assistance to their children was a source of anguish, and a tormenting challenge to male slaves' masculine identity. Henry Bibb expressed his frustration at being the 'father of slaves' who were 'still left to linger out their days in hopeless bondage'...Ex-slaves also lamented their inability to assist their mothers..." David Honeyboy Edwards, *The World Don't Owe Me Nothing: The Life and Times of Delta Bluesman Honeyboy Edwards* (Chicago Review Press, 2000), 50: "And it was always 'boy,' they always call you 'boy.' Up to about thirty, thirty-five years of age, black men in the South are called boy. When you get older, they call you uncle. They don't want to call you by your name!"
Masonic devotion, believed they were ideally suited to lead their race.\textsuperscript{94} It appears the black Masons of Ontario subscribed to certain negative notions of their own race, consistent with white and black Victorian middle-class values. Their disdain for lesser or lower class individuals and their habits, and their veiled acceptance of certain white views of blacks in North America, placed the Masons at odds with those they often claimed to serve. In the following passage we hear joy in the potential advancement of the race, yet it is set against a backdrop of negative (though common) racial tropes:

Every number shows the rapid advancement made and the eminent responsiveness of the negro to instruction. We are \textit{no longer imitators}, but thinkers and originators, and the more learned and the more honorable negroes are active and influential members of the Masonic Order.\textsuperscript{95}

Echoing the common white opinion that blacks were at best imitators, the Mason was supposed to help shape future generations and provide the necessary tools to combat the intellectual, spiritual, mental, and educational underdevelopment of black men (and, eventually, women). For example, a proper Mason recognized that “illiteracy is one of, if not the greatest barriers to a successful commercial, professional or spiritual life.”\textsuperscript{96} Again, the aspirations of these men were heavily influenced by a historical framework in which slaves were refused an education by law, where whites doubted the intellectual capacity of blacks, and where freed blacks debated the value of industrial training versus more intellectual pursuits.\textsuperscript{97} In his book entitled \textit{Schooling the Freed People: Teaching Learning and the Struggle for Black Freedom, 1861-1876}, Ronald E. Butchart describes how "public education for African Americans rapidly fell far behind that provided for white students, and some states stopped providing any sort of secondary

\textsuperscript{95} \textit{Proceedings, 1902-1905} [1904], 26.  
\textsuperscript{96} Ibid.  
education."⁹⁸ Moreover, the black schools established by Northern women met opposition for a number of reasons, one being that "the curriculum of these schools did not fit easily into local dominant discourses,…Rather their curriculum envisioned autonomous black activity, intellectual ability, and black access to middle-class occupations and status, when much of the white South instead envisioned a subservient, docile black future."⁹⁹

That these men believed that "[m]oral leprosy is with illiteracy the bane and a dangerous menace to the well-being of society…"¹⁰⁰ reflects the import of education to a Mason. Since "the late 1700s, Freemasonry was the organization most responsible for spreading the ideals of the enlightenment: the dignity of man and the liberty of the individual…and the importance of public education. Masons supported the first public schools in both Europe and America."¹⁰¹ Keeping this Masonic tradition alive, one of the foundational acts of the Prince Hall Chapter in Chatham was the creation and support of the schools, and education was viewed as the vehicle that would drive black progress. In an address given in 1904, James C. Richards, Grand Master, informs his flock that if they could create a “highly intellectual, moral and spiritual Christian Masonic membership” any and all “social problems, race problems, national problems, family problems, negrophobia, [and] divorce would speedily become things of the past and would hardly live in memory.”¹⁰² In this single statement, Grand Master Richards situated himself squarely amongst his early twentieth century contemporaries in the burgeoning social purity movement in Canada. He euphemistically identified such character soiling habits as prostitution, intemperance,

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⁹⁹ Butchart, *Schooling the Freed People*, 91-92; "Slaves Are Prohibited to Read and Write by Law;" in Manning Marable and Leith Mullings eds., *Let Nobody Turn Us Around: Voices of Resistance, Reform, and Renewal: An African American Anthology* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009), 39-40: "Slavemasters understood that their social control of the slaves could not be based solely on physical coercion. Knowledge was power, and virtually all slave codes established in the United States set restrictions making it illegal to teach slaves to read or write."
¹⁰⁰ *Proceedings, 1902-1905* [1904], 26.
adultery, crime, and poverty, seemingly conscious that "the Victorian family [and society], more often than not, failed to live up to its rhetorical construction." Sensitivities to these issues became increasingly evident at this time—the result of an equally expanding middle-class, which sought to "reform or 'regenerate' Canadian society" through the social reform movement. At this time, there was a confidence among the middling classes that society could be engineered, where vice would be replaced by virtue in "a grand project to 'regenerate' both society and the human soul." Richards' view that illiteracy caused "moral leprosy" and that "intellectual, moral, and spiritual" endeavors would transform society's worst ills fits well within the world of social reform and social purity movements that understood "social problems...as moral [problems]." Theirs was a clear path with a clear trajectory and a goal that would not be questioned once it was reached. Subscribing to the day-to-day necessity of the "lifting as we climb" motto of the National Association of Colored Women (1896), it was without irony that Prince Hall Masons firmly held the belief that any and all social ills could be solved and averted through education. However, it bears repeating that they did not believe that every man was worthy of being lifted to their level.

**Charity:**

The Lodge's organizational goals extended beyond that of education. As was the case for many fraternal organizations and nascent unions, charity could rightly be considered the

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105 Valverde, "Introduction to the Age of Light, Soap, and Water," 119. Though not sharing J.C. Richards' 'polite' language Valverde quotes an example of late nineteenth century the list of social purity objectives: "In 1895, a Canadian clergyman speaking at an important Purity Congress in Baltimore described 'social purity work in Canada' as including the following issues: prostitution, divorce illegitimacy, 'Indians and Chinese,' public education, suppression of obscene literature, prevention (of prostitution) and rescue of fallen women, and shelters for women and children."
106 Valverde, "Introduction to the Age of Light, Soap, and Water," 122.
founding motive upon which Masonry was built. Through the years of their existence, Masons made several attempts to organize an official insurance policy, a system set up to guarantee help to the widows and children of members who had died. These benefits were not at all uncommon within black and white fraternal organizations alike, as nearly every fraternal order" offered some type of financial benefit, in the form of "death and burial benefits," "life-insurance benefits," and "sick benefits."107

In 1875, the Grand Master of the Grand Lodge carried a motion to create a “Grand Lodge Charity Fund,” which would impose a $.25 cent tax on “every M.M. [Master Mason] in [the] jurisdiction to assist in defraying the burial expenses of any deceased M.M., and any amount remaining be paid to his widow or children.”108 In 1883, Grand Master George Reeves reported on a family in need, provided for by the Lodge at the request of the Grand Secretary in December of the previous year. The “requests for contributions from [the lodges] to aid the widow of a deceased brother of one of [their] weakest lodges” was met by a meager response from three lodges.109 “Mt. Carmel contributed $5.25, Mt. Olive, No. 1, $5.00, and Victoria, No. 2, contributed $4.”110 For this, the Order was admonished:

In view of the fact that this money was unexpected, may we not imagine with what joy this struggling bereaved soul, with a large family of infant children received it? Can you wonder if tears of gratitude, and prayers for your welfare, are not ascending up, wafted as sweet incense from the altar? Brethren, if three lodges can do this, why cannot five contribute a sum annually to be put away for this noble and glorious purpose? We are

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107 Paul Finkelman, ed., *Encyclopedia of African American History, 1896 to the Present—From the Age of Segregation to the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 269-272; David T. Beito, *From Mutual Aid to the Welfare State: How Fraternal Societies Fought Poverty and Taught Character* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 14, "The precise extent of fraternal organizations in the United States during this period will never be known. The fraternal life insurance societies had at least 1.3 million members by 1890, and by 1910 they had grown to 8.5 million. That year the combined membership of all types of fraternal societies was at least 13 million."
108 *Proceedings, 1875-1876*, 36.
109 Transactions of the M.W. Grand Lodge of the Province of Ontario Dominion of Canada, of the Most Ancient and Honorable Fraternity of Free and Accepted Masons, begun and held at Chatham, Ontario, June 20th, 21st and 22d, 1883(Detroit: O.S. Gulley, Bornman & Co., Printers, 1884), 8.
110 *Transactions of the M.W. Grand Lodge, 1883*, 8.
measured, not so much by our profession, as by our practices and “faith without works is dead.””

In 1888 the issue was revisited. The Grand Master Henry Weaver, reminding the brothers that “one of the most important duties in Masonry, (Charity),…has been neglected,” recommended that every member “pay the sum of $1.00 at the death of a brother, for the benefit of his widow and orphans” and recommended that the “Grand Body…elect a Board of Directors consisting of not less than five [members]” to organize this new insurance fund.”

Unfortunately, it seems as though this fund fell by the wayside since, in 1904 Grand Master J.C. Richards expressed his concern that the Order was “not doing much in the way of caring for the widows and orphans of deceased brethren,” and felt that they should figure out “some system whereby material aid would be given to widows and orphans.” He acknowledged that funds were not in abundance, but believed that “by uniting means [they could] possibly do something creditable to the fraternity and helpful to the recipients of our united charity.”

A year later in 1905, the brothers continued to disagree with the format of the insurance and charity fund, as they voted unanimously to “do away with the entire constitution of the Masonic Relief Association,” and instead “recommend that the constitution of the Grand Lodge be so amended that on the death of a Brother each subordinate lodge collect an additional sum of $.50 cents from each of its members in good standing for the benefit of the deceased Brother’s widow or orphans.”

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111Ibid.
113Proceedings, 1902-1905 (1904), 29.
114Ibid.
115Proceedings, 1902-1905 (1905), 50.
Property:

In addition to education and charity, the brotherhood felt that the purchasing of property would also raise their profile, demonstrate their liquidity, and expand their institutional and "manly" independence by highlighting their socioeconomic status and maturity. The symbolism and significance of property could not have been lost on Prince Hall Masons at the turn of the century. That "black men were systematically denied the very fundamental elements of white Victorian masculinity: citizenship and ownership property," and that they "were all too aware that they and their ancestors were once the property of others," suggests that the purchasing of property was paramount to any movement that intended to demonstrate the legitimacy of black manhood. Additionally, it is likely no coincidence that the call to property ownership was made in the post-Confederation world where property qualifications limited voting eligibility. As early as 1883, the Grand Lodge was keen enough to suggest that the subordinate lodges begin a campaign to purchase property in their respective towns. In the case of St. John’s Lodge, Chatham, the Grand Master believed that they “should take steps while the town is young and property comparatively cheap, to purchase a site for a masonic hall of their own and thus centralize the Grand Lodge.” In 1905, the Grand Master encouraged the Grand Lodge to purchase properties “in some city or town in the jurisdiction where we can rent a

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116 Geoff Stokes, "Introduction," in The Politics of Identity in Australia edited by Geoff Stokes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 72. "The term 'manly independence' and its particular meaning were undoubtedly inherited from the iconography of British Chartism...[it] had a distinctly masculine form and meaning in British Chartism, in that it was defined by the ability to maintain dependents in the home."


118 Jean A. Laponce, William Safran, Ethnicity and Citizenship: The Canadian Case (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd, 1996), 18, "At Confederation the new government of Canada adopted the existing provincial franchises as the federal franchise. The provinces already had selective qualifications firmly established. Two restrictions were generally applied: suffrage was confined to adult male British subjects and each subject had to meet a property qualification, generally speaking $300 in real property in the cities and towns and $200 in rural areas."

119 Transactions, 1883, 8.
portion of the same to the best advantage from a financial point of view.”¹²⁰ The benefits, in addition to financial gain, would be to “show a progressive spirit such as would be commendable and mark our importance as Masons.”¹²¹

For the Mason, progress was the product of a commitment to industriousness, and it is important to note that many of these men were successful local businessmen and skilled tradesmen in their own right. It was not enough to be prolific on a personal and professional level; the brotherhood was strongly encouraged to “go forth and prosper” in a culturally, economically, socially and morally meaningful way. Hard work was understood as the cornerstone of future Masonic prosperity, and Masonic prosperity was viewed as an avenue towards racial and economic equality. Each man who called himself a brother of the Masonic Order was expected “to earn his bread by the sweat of his face and to eat no man’s bread but for naught”, to work “an honest day’s toil,” and to understand that they were “co-laborer[s] in Masonry with men who are home builders and preservers.”¹²² In this sense, building, in a Masonic context, was both literal and figurative.

**Obedience to the Craft: Morality, Masculinity, and “Unmasonic Conduct”**

I would therefore urge upon you, my brethren, in the most friendly manner, the necessity of so living that you can feel at all times that you are in heart and soul worthy Masons, remembering that no man is a FREE MASON who is the bondman of vice or immorality.¹²³

Messages such as this appear frequently within the Grand Lodge Proceedings. Their purpose was to instill within each Mason an understanding of his obligation to possess a "resolute" morality. One of the dominant themes was the preservation of the institution, whose purpose it was to groom an exemplary group of men who would not only serve their

¹²⁰ *Proceedings, 1902-1905* (1905), 44.
¹²¹ Ibid.
¹²³ *Proceedings 1875-1876*, 29.
communities and families, but also protect the reputation of the Masonic Order by living in such a manner that would attract other worthy men. Also of utmost importance was the issue of respectability. A Prince Hall Mason had to protect the public view of the Order by living a clean life. In 1892-93, Grand Master Henry Weaver summarizes the role of the Mason as tasked with living

upright lives, shunning the very appearance of anything, act, or person that is calculated to bring a reproach upon our ancient and honorable institution. Let us by our conduct and chaste conversation cause the profane to see and acknowledge that the sacred principles and tenets of Freemasonry will, if adhered to, make a man a better man, a better citizen, and a better Christian, for I assure you that its principles stand pre-eminently above any other society’s principles. She is the mother of all good societies and the handmaiden of Christianity.\textsuperscript{124}

This was surely no short order for any man. Inasmuch as living an “upright” life was important to each individual Mason’s heart and soul, how and whether it was evident to outsiders was just as, if not more, important. Not only did a Mason need to “raise to a very high standard of morality,” in support of the institution, but he also had to be concerned with how they (Masons) “are judged by the uninitiated.”\textsuperscript{125} It was important to the practitioners of the Craft that Masonry be acknowledged as something more than “a club or ordinary gathering of men” by outsiders who “either by reason…utter lack of knowledge…[or a] willful defiant spirit against masonry, or a disregard of its laws and doctrines,” refused to comprehend the value and purpose of Masonry.\textsuperscript{126} Its purpose was, in part, to create “good citizens” who were “keenly alive to the best interest of society.” As stated by Grand Master J.C. Richards in 1924, “[I]f men will not live upon the line of their professions, let them go, ten good men are of more consequence to the Craft than a thousand of questionable virtue.”\textsuperscript{127}

\textsuperscript{124}Proceedings, 1892-1893, 9.
\textsuperscript{125}Proceedings 1902-1905, 7.
\textsuperscript{126}Grand Master’s Address, 1924, 5.
\textsuperscript{127}Ibid.
The 1892-93 Report of the Committee on Foreign Correspondence includes certain resolutions of American Lodges concerning the comportment of their members and immoral behaviours that ought not be accepted by subordinate lodges or the Grand Lodges for fear of censure from their detractors. For example, a report from Tennessee agreed “no lodge in this jurisdiction shall initiate, pass or raise to the sublime degree of Master Mason any person running a gambling house or house of ill-fame.”\(^{128}\) In addition to this resolution the Lodge found that “any Master Mason who marries a woman of bad character shall be expelled from his lodge, as virtue and morality is the true principle of Free Masonry.”\(^{129}\) There is no indication in the Ontario Grand Lodge Proceedings that they disagreed with these resolutions; judging from their other dictates, these resolutions did not deviate from the general definition of immoral and unacceptable behaviours (or individuals).

The vetting of new members appears to have been a rather complicated task for the Order. Existing members could not actively recruit new members, a frustrating rule given the common concern about dwindling numbers. An interested man would be expected to approach the Order of his own volition, and he would be subject to a thorough evaluation of his life and character. The Order was “careful about the quality of the material from which they would make Masons,” each member expected to examine “the character and qualifications of an applicant for Masonic honors, scrutinize closely…[to] be convinced…that he is a fit and proper person to be entrusted with the valuable secrets of masonry, and to be received into [the] brotherhood.”\(^{130}\) And while “Masonry does not regard a man for which wealth or fame alone can give him”, it does “[regard] him for his manhood.”\(^{131}\) Furthermore,

\(^{128}\) *Proceedings*, 1892-1893, 52-53.
\(^{129}\) Ibid.
\(^{130}\) *Proceedings*, 1894-1895, 30.
\(^{131}\) Ibid., 31.
If he be a man of negative qualities, that no one can know neither good nor bad about him, if he be one of those peculiar somebodies who has never developed sufficient force of character to make himself recognized in this great world of positive men, he is not made of that kind of material which can profit or be profited by Masonry…

Questions Masons were required to consider when evaluating the worth of a potential member included, “what good thing do you know of him? What are his habits? [and] Who are his associates?” Also of significance was whether or not the Masonic hopeful had “sufficient pride of character to make the most of the good gifts with which God has endowed him,” and whether, according to the George H. Hughes in 1894-95,

he [is] of that quality of man that after having been entrusted to the secrets of Masonry, that we can take him by the hand and walk with him in all brotherly love and respect till we reach the end of time. If he be such a man then indeed we may feel proud to admit him among us and call him our brother, and if he be not he will prove a source of weakness to us.

A “Petition for Initiation and Membership” to St. John’s Lodge in Chatham, dated February 5th 1917, offers further examples of the type of man the Order had in mind. The preamble of this application sheet requires the uninitiated man to affirm that he came to request membership “unbiased by the improper solicitation of friends, uninfluenced by mercenary or other unworthy motives and prompted by a favorable opinion and a desire for knowledge.” After asking his name, age, place of birth and current residence, the initiate must explain “explicitly [his] business or occupation for the past ten years, and where”, affirm that he has been a citizen of Ontario for the last year, describe where he has lived in the past ten years (where and over what period of time), and whether he has ever belonged to, or been rejected by, a Masonic Lodge. He is asked if he believes “in the existence of one ever-living and true God”, whether he is “in sound bodily health” and whether he knows of “any physical, legal, or moral reason” that would

132 Ibid.
133 Ibid.
134 Ibid.
135 Petition for Initiation and Membership.
prevent him from becoming a member. He is also required to state whether he has any physical deformity or defect.\textsuperscript{136} Gauging the contents of this application form, it appears quite clear the type of man the brotherhood was willing to admit. He was required to be of sound mind, body, soul, and spirit. Given the questions concerning his profession and the location and duration of his residences, they expected a competent, secure, stable, contributing member of society who also happened to be a moral man who professed belief in God.

\textsuperscript{136}Petition for Initiation and Membership.
Figure 13: Petition for Initiation and Membership to St. John's Lodge, Chatham, Ontario, 1917. Name of applicant redacted from original. Permission to use this image granted by J. Robinson from their personal collection.
Masculinity:

Of all the themes present within these Proceedings, masculinity is one often highlighted and underlined. A Masonic member’s idealized manhood was a measure of his worth as a Mason, a citizen, a husband, and a father. As previously discussed, it was a class-based ideal of manhood that reflected values commonly held by nineteenth century middle-class blacks and whites.

Though the construct of manliness itself was narrow, it shaped Masonic understandings of the roles black men ought to play within their families, communities, and workplaces. Their focus on it was explicit and clearly stated. Josiah F. Scott, Grand Master of the Grand Lodge in 1875, believed that

\[\text{everywhere in Masonry, whether in the lecture or in symbolism, are found the breathings of virtue, of honesty, of self-denial, of justice, of charity, of true manliness. By precept and example it is your parts and duties to inculcate these lessons among those over whom you are placed, that the members of our fraternity may be looked up to as patterns of these inestimable virtues, and so our beloved Order be everywhere by its members, and by the outside world….respected and honored.}\]

This statement exemplifies the Masonic understanding of what it means to be a man and a Mason. It also expresses another common theme; that of “[t]eaching by example rather than by precept”. Teaching by example appeared to be the best way to communicate and model “manhood.” According to J.C. Richards, Grand Master in 1924, “masonic influence…grows because friendship is its object—true manhood its goal—mutual assistance its inculcated duty—brotherly love its ruling passion—temperance, fortitude, prudence and justice its cardinal principals [sic]”

As in Josiah Scott’s statement, it was the Masonic brother’s role to “inculcate these lessons among those over whom you are placed.” This statement implies that not only is each Mason required to possess virtue, honesty, self-denial, justice, charity and “true manliness”, he is

137 Proceedings, 1875-1876, 47. Emphasis added.
138 Grand Master's Address, 1924, 2.
139 Proceedings, 1875-1876, 47.
also required to teach these qualities, as would a father, to a supposed hierarchy of individuals whom he is responsible for (or to whom he is responsible). This form of paternalism would have necessarily been applied to his relationship with younger Masons, a Brother’s wife and children (and the wives and children of the his fellow Masons), employees, and/or co-workers, as well as other community members. As understood by these men, Masonry provided the tools through which true manliness could be achieved, as

[m]asonry rightly understood reaches the very roots of all true progress, for she directs her energies to the gathering of moral not material wealth. She applies her efforts to the improvement not of circumstances but of character, and it is character that makes manhood and it is manhood that makes possible all true and lasting progress.”\textsuperscript{140}

Masonry, according to this statement, creates ideal black men, and without ideal black men, progress is impeded or impossible. Progress was of paramount significance to these men, as theirs was an absolute understanding that the progression of the race was completely implicated in gaining white acceptance, access and invitation into “their” institutions, and shifting the perceptions concerning what black men were truly capable of. Accordingly, “[m]asonry demands of each member manhood and will give valuable assistance in the raising of that manhood to that high moral character.”\textsuperscript{141} Providing the training ground that would lead to “high moral character” is understood as the “essential and characteristic of true Masonic brotherhood.”\textsuperscript{142} More to the point, according to J.C. Richards: “Masonry is MANHOOD.”\textsuperscript{143} Beyond that, it was also each brother’s responsibility to monitor every other member’s character to see that he was meeting Masonic expectations of what it meant to be a man. According to the Grand Master J.C. Richards, speaking in 1924, it is not only “the bounden duty of every mason to see that his brother mason

\textsuperscript{140}Grand Master's Address, 1924, 2.
\textsuperscript{141}Proceedings, 1902-1905, 18.
\textsuperscript{142}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{143}Grand Master's Address, 1924, 5. Emphasis in original.
maintain a high moral standard in his community,” he is in fact “his brother’s keeper” whose “sphere of duty is not bounded by the limits of his own lodge.”

The Masonic preoccupation with character, reputation, morality, and proper representations of black masculinity culminate in the following section. It is one thing to promote high ideals, but it appears that as much as it was a Mason’s duty to watch his brother, he also had to forfeit his own privacy. A Mason who disobeyed the dictates of the Order, embarrassed himself or another brother, or otherwise brought shame and/or judgment to the Order, faced a dishonor that would extend beyond the Lodge. According to J.C. Richards, speaking to his brothers in 1924 admonished: “failure to discipline Masons for gross unmasonic offences is a damage to the character and well-being of the institutions. It is a stab at its honour and integrity, and the destroying of its dignity.” The language of this statement attests to the gravity with which the brothers approached members who failed to keep their oath to the Lodge.

“Unmasonic Conduct”:

A reading of the reports conducted by the Grand Lodge’s Committee of Grievances provides a comprehensive example of how Prince Hall Masons dealt with the members who ran afoul of institutional mandates. It is obvious that the cost to participate in this Order went beyond the mere payment of yearly dues. In most cases, a Masonic brother willingly sacrificed some personal autonomy and his right to privacy as the price of admittance.

A major prerequisite for participation in the Order was, in addition to a solid grasp of the rules, a devotion to its dictates, lest a member be expelled, suspended, or otherwise censured. The reports of the Committee of Grievances, which was a prominent feature within each of the yearly Proceedings, indicate the behaviours that were expected of each member and describe the

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144Ibid.
145Ibid.
processes by which their trespass(es) against the Order would be tried. Given the benefits of membership, which included but were not limited to the payment of burial expenses, the financial and emotional support for the widows and children of the members, and the respect of a limited, albeit influential, group of men within the community, it is clear that excommunication from the Order could be both costly as well as publicly and professionally embarrassing. What we see in the grievance reports are the types of offenses considered “unmasonic” and the importance of Masonic law and order, and due process. The following portion from the Grievance Committee’s report at the Annual Session of the Grand Lodge in 1874, illustrates the seriousness with which members were dealt and the paternalism that manifests when strict rules of conduct are enforced upon grown men:

Resolved, That while this M.W. [Most Worshipful] Grand Lodge acquiesce in the justice of the action of Mt. Olive Lodge in the expulsion of [name redacted] and the expulsion of [names redacted], and admire the discretion exercised for the benefit of the craft, they will and desire that the expulsion of said [name redacted] be commuted to a suspension of six months space, from all Masonic privileges and rank, and providing said [name redacted] proves by his actions at the close of said term that he has fully repented of the actions for which he was suspended, that he be ordered to appear before the altar of his Lodge for a severe and proper reprimand from the W.M. [Worshipful Master], and from and after that date he shall be in full fellowship with the craft…

It is unclear what these men were charged with that merited a six-month suspension. Equally unclear is what these men were required to do in order to “fully repent” for their trespasses, and what a “severe and proper reprimand” would look and sound like, outside of the comparably mild six-month suspension. A reading of other Proceedings provides a brief list of some, though surely not all, conduct deemed “unmasonic”. Included among the charges were: embezzlement, immodesty, disobedience, use of profane language, non-payment of dues,

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“improper and illegal decisions” (disregarding or failing to follow proper procedure of the Order), physical violence, “bad habits”, “theft and drunkenness”, “appropriation of funds”, “disobedience of summons”, “abuse and non-support of [a Mason’s] family, “falsehood and bigamy,” and anything else deemed generally “unmasonic”.

In 1877, when a Brother was charged with “careless exhibition of signs not in use in that part of Masonry in which he was then at work”, the Grievance Committee felt that due to “subsequent misfortunes and illness of that brother having supervened” they thought it reasonable to “recommend…he be relieved from all censure, and be…cautioned to [sic] exercise greater discretion in future.”

Proper conduct on behalf of the members was mandatory and the offenses varied from widely unacceptable behaviour by any standard (physical violence) to lesser transgressions (use of profane language and immodesty). Punishments ranged from suspensions, a few months to years in duration, to expulsion, which was for life. The brothers of the Lodge exercised the rule of law in an exacting manner. Following protocol was paramount, and all the rights one would expect within the legal system existed within Lodge’s grievance proceedings. A brother who felt he was wrongly accused, or whose case was mishandled by their local subordinate lodge could seek appeal to expunge the charge or have the sentence commuted within the Grand Lodge. It appears that a failure to appeal a charge would suggest guilt, and the punishment that was decided by the Committee and accepted by the Grand Master as fair would be carried. For example, a charge of unmasonic conduct, “falsehood” and bigamy was lodged against a brother in St. John’s Lodge in 1882. The individual did not appeal the decision nor challenge the charge and was thereby expelled for life. Another brother appealed his suspension in 1875 for non-

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147 Proceedings, 1888, 10 (non-payment physical violence); Proceedings, 1902-1905, 9 (theft and drunkenness); 21 (embezzlement and appropriating funds of the lodge); Transactions, 1883, 20 (improper and illegal decisions, non payment of dues and disobedience of summons).

payment of dues, and the Committee determined that the evidence he presented at his appeal did not stand up against the evidence against him. According to the Proceedings, this individual was in control of the finances of the Lodge and his having “taken advantage of their [the Lodge’s] confidence” was the real transgression. In this case, the Committee saw fit to confirm the original sentence.\footnote{Ibid., 12.} In 1883, a brother charged with “Unmasonic Conduct: Disobedience and Using Profane Language”, failed in “doing what [he] was told to do in his capacity as Secretary and for using profane language within the lodge room”, and “violat[ing] his oath and obligation as a master mason.”\footnote{Transactions, 1883, 17.} The Committee decided that this particular member deserved a commuted sentence, “from expulsion to that of suspension for one year, or until the next annual session,” where his membership would be restored, “if found worthy, by the majority of the members present.”\footnote{Ibid.} Similarly, in 1893, a brother made “application to [the] Grand Body to restore [his] rights as a Mason or else to have the sentence placed upon [him] by St. John’s Lodge, No. 9, A.F. and A.M. March 15\textsuperscript{th}, 1893, reduced, as it is greater than the crime.”\footnote{Proceedings, 1892-1893, 30.} It is not clear what that crime was. However, in keeping with due process, upon careful examination the Committee recommended “his sentence be reduced to one year instead of two years as per decision of St. John’s Lodge No. 9, which was suspension for two years.”\footnote{Ibid.} Inasmuch as the issue of misconduct involved the behaviour of the brothers within the Lodge itself, the Masonic sphere of influence extended beyond the discrete walls of the Order. In the Proceedings from the Annual Communication for 1875-1876 a grievance report discussed an accusation of embezzlement charged against a brother of the Order by a female outsider.\footnote{Proceedings, 1875-1876, 34.} This
case suggests that the Order’s influence extended into the regulation of personal and private activities of its members and that members of the wider black community, who were not themselves members of the Lodge, were willing and able to use the grievance system within the Lodge to seek redress. Perhaps keeping such issues within the confines and control of the Lodge was viewed as an alternative form of redress, a “for us and by us” approach, one that necessarily avoided interaction with white institutions of law and order. It is important to note, however, that the Masonic Lodge, insofar as its members were concerned, was a regulatory body that provided an alternative to outside formal processes.

While the Lodge provided an alternative to the public legal system, in that it could be used to discipline members of the Order, questions of coercion and surveillance cannot be avoided. The Lodge was certainly not the first public institution to use and promote this type of coercive practice. In nineteenth century Canada, members of the local church often watched over the flock in order to ensure adherence to values that would promote "community harmony." In certain instances, "[t]hose who violated Christian standards in these matters were called to account by other members of their church community," and church members faced "temporary suspension or permanent expulsion," which could only be avoided if the offending party confessed their sin or "other evidence of sincere contrition." The church did not appreciate the distinction between private and public, and understood that the lives of the converted "were subject to church scrutiny, because after conversion all aspects of their lives were…'a public testimonial to the power and the Spirit." Analogously, it appears as though once a man pled his Masonic oath and became a Mason, they expected him to uphold its institutional values

156 Marks, "Christian Harmony," 110.
157 Ibid., 111.
whether he was inside the Lodge Hall, in church, at home, or walking down Main Street. It is rather ironic, however, that Patricia Hill Collins in her book *Fighting Words: Black Women and the Search for Justice* argues that "[f]amilies, churches, fraternal organizations, and other institutions of the black public sphere offered African-Americans protection from White surveillance" and "served as a fundamental arena that challenged both racial segregation and surveillance as strategies of control." Rather than be subjected to the oppressive white gaze and its various institutional corollaries, Collins posits that black organizations protected their own and provided public spaces wherein blacks could manage their own affairs. However, in these Masonic cases, membership came at a cost. Surveillance would not have been difficult given the size of Chatham’s black population at the close of the nineteenth century, its close-knit church community, and the geographically limited space within which these institutions existed. Knowing that outsiders could file grievances directly to the Lodge would have ensured due diligence on the part of its members to behave according to the dictates of the Order.

Another case that appeared in the Committee of Grievance and Appeal in 1894-1895 concerns two charges lodged against a member of Lincoln Lodge No. 8. The first charge was drunkenness and the second charge was “Abuse and non-support of his family.” The Committee found that the “record of the trial is perfect” and they recommended that the judgment of expulsion (no appeal forthcoming) be affirmed. The *Proceedings* do not indicate who reported the brother from Lincoln Lodge No. 8, and yet it remains a testament to the extent of the Lodge’s influence in the lives of its members. How did the Lodge find out about the member’s “non-support of his family”? Drunkenness, however, according to nineteenth century

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160 Ibid.
precedents, was not a charge applied to men who occasionally indulged in alcohol consumption. As Julia Roberts found in her study of nineteenth century taverns, a charge of drunkenness suggests a chronic and fairly public indiscretion. Drunkenness was understood in "anti-social terms."¹⁶¹ This type of behaviour would be hard to miss in a city the size of Chatham; however, the failure to support one’s family is not something so easily identified. "Drunkenness affected a person's ability to behave in a sensible manner and 'attend to business'; it threatened the drunk's personal safety and made it necessary for companions or family to retrieve him or her from the tavern."¹⁶² The informant could have been a fellow brother within the lodge, the accused member’s spouse or children, or in fact, any other member of the community or church. And while it may be honorable that the Lodge held its members to a strict morality and imposed their own ideas concerning a man’s role within his family, it is somewhat surprising to know that these men were willing to endure the uncomfortable and thorough surveillance within the home and community as a necessary requirement to belonging to an organization that was financially, spiritually, socially, and professionally beneficial. Interestingly, this type of charge indicates, as well, that the Lodge, perhaps inadvertently, provided wives an avenue of recourse outside of the home and formal legal proceedings.

Another report by the Grievance Committee in 1894-1895 illustrates the seriousness of the Grievance proceedings, their adherence to trial and jury procedure and the at times salacious nature of some of the charges. In this particular case, “The defendant [was] accused of the crime of seduction committed in Chatham, Ont., while he was pastor of a church there, and the young girl being the daughter of a Master Mason.” The proceedings continued as follows:

¹⁶²Roberts, In Mixed Company, 94.
The defendant was summoned by mail and served with a copy of the charges, and failed to appear. The record of the trial is in due form, and we recommend that the judgment [of expulsion] be sustained…In the case of the charge preferred at this annual communication by St. John’s Lodge No. 9 vs. [name redacted] we recommend that there be a trial board appointed consisting of three (3) brethren of Mt. Olive Lodge No. 1, who are also members of this Grand Lodge. And the said trial board to hear the case at a time set by them within 90 days from this date, and immediately upon the finding of their verdict and the rendering of judgment (if any) they shall report to the Grand Master for his affirmation, subject to the affirming or reversal of the Gr. Lodge at its next annual communication.”

According to Karen Dubinsky, "'Maidenly Girls' or Designing Women?' The Crime of Seduction in Turn-of-the Century Ontario," criminal seduction laws were introduced in Canada in the 1880s as a way to assert the notion that "morality was a community concern," rather than "a matter of individual reputation." This perspective was likely shared by the brothers, who may have felt that such an indiscretion by a fellow Mason would reflect poorly on the morality of the organization overall. Seduction in this case may also not have been concerned with issues of direct consent or "forcible, coercive attack," as Dubinsky found in her study that the majority of seduction cases she surveyed were "the result of ongoing mutual relations between two lovers." While impossible to determine, it is more likely that a Masonic brother was involved in a relationship with another brother's daughter which was likely viewed as inappropriate when viewed through the eyes of the "overwhelmingly paternal nature of…criminal seduction law." That their reputation was of paramount importance, it is also likely that the Chapter did not support criminally charging the accused. Given that the "maximum penalty for those found

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163 Proceedings, 1894-1895, 39.
165 Dubinsky, "'Maidenly Girls' or Designing Women?'", 34.
166 Ibid.
guilty of seduction was two years in prison," perhaps the offending party was lucky that his transgression was attended to in-house rather than publicly.\textsuperscript{167}

In keeping with the religious nuances of the Masonic Lodge, another Report of the Committee on Grievances provides an example of how important membership was for some of these men and how salient the fear of excommunication. In this 1874 case, a member had been “indefinitely suspended from Mt. Olive Lodge” and his suspension had been further confirmed in the same year. It was recorded that the member was “praying to be reinstated and restored to his former membership,” and on “the recommendation of his lodge, and promises of reform recommended that the prayer of the petitioner be granted.”\textsuperscript{168} One could reasonably suppose that such benevolence was a relief for the brother who had run afoul of Masonic law. Though this member’s specific indictment was not released in the report, one could surmise that it was likely one of the more mild offenses and his contrition was sufficient to justify a reprieve. This was not the case for a brother of St. John’s Lodge, who, it appears, stretched the limits of the Order’s benevolence and tolerance for misconduct. This individual petitioned the Grand Lodge “asking to be restored back to his former position” in the St. John’s Lodge, claiming “he had reformed his former bad habits.” What these “bad habits” were is unclear, however, the findings of the Committee indicates that the member was beyond redemption:

But we find on examination that [the accused] has not reformed of his former bad habits, and since his suspension we find that he has become mentally deranged, therefore we recommend that his petition be not entertained, on the grounds that on March, 1888, he attempted to commit suicide.\textsuperscript{169}

At least in this case, brotherly compassion did not supersede the preservation of institutional integrity.

\textsuperscript{167}Ibid
\textsuperscript{168}Proceedings, 1875-1876, 26-27. Emphasis Added.
\textsuperscript{169}Proceedings, 1888, 8.
The rules, regulations, censures, rhetoric, and institutional devotion of the Prince Hall Masons in Chatham, when filtered through the thematic lens of nineteenth century Victorian masculine ideals, African American and African Canadian racial uplift campaigns, community building, and middle-class respectability, strongly suggests that these men were actively participating in the re-imaging of blackness and maleness at the turn of the twentieth century. Challenging the notion that "Blacks have no history," in that they produced something worthy of note, it is clear that Prince Hall Freemasonry in small town Ontario contributed greatly to their communities, all while attempting to prepare young black men by grooming them according to strict middle-class ideals. The impact these men had in their immediate world is difficult to quantify, but it is certain that they provided spaces where black manhood could be repaired and encouraged, where men could become leaders of their homes, churches, schools, and businesses.
Prince Hall Masons were not, however, alone in their cause and Masonic zeal was not solely the jurisdiction of men. Black women in Chatham also shared comparable spaces where they found and provided comfort and strength, contributed to Chatham's black community, and sought to multiply the spirit of benevolence within and outside of their sisterhood.
Order of the Eastern Star:

So I started, and I had no intention, but it was because I saw what people were doing. I took the job very seriously. It’s a benevolent organization! First of all your obligation is to help and this is not a secret, you’re to help the widow and orphan. You’re to help families. You’re to take care of each other.170

Speaking of her transition into the role of Grand Worthy Matron, this quote from a Chatham member epitomizes the spirit of benevolence expected of the women elected to the Order of the Eastern Star (OES). That women had historically participated in benevolent associations and organizations is well known.171 Their exclusion from male organizations did not preclude their determination to organize mutual aid and charity groups. African American women's participation in more formalized associations emerged first among antebellum free blacks in the United States who participated in groups such as the Female Benevolent Society and the African Friendly Society in the first decades of the nineteenth century.172 Initially, the goals of benevolence, charity, and racial uplift took the form of assisting fugitive slaves and providing spaces where black children could go to school.173 Later, the focus extended into moral reform parties and literary and mother's societies as the middle-class ranks expanded into the twentieth century.

The OES was created in 1889, as an “adoptive body of the Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge.”174 Prior to its creation, “Female Lodges” existed in various forms, as offshoots from the central male lodge. In fact, Eastern Star affiliates were first introduced in early

170 Name Redacted, interview by Carmen Poole, July 16, 2010.
172 Brown, African American Fraternities and Sororities, 73.
173 Ibid.
eighteenth century France, and among white lodges in the United States in 1868. In light of the Grand Lodge reorganization in 1872, and in an effort to further organize and centralize their efforts, it was decided that the “corresponding Order of the Eastern Star Chapters working in Chatham, Windsor and Hamilton,” should come together to create a Grand Chapter. During a meeting of the Grand Lodge of Ontario in 1889, “Grand Master Brother Henry Weaver indicated that a Grand Chapter would be set up before the year ended.” The following Chapters of the Order of the Eastern Star met in Chatham at the Masonic Hall on August 30th, 1889, at 9 am:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Electa No. 1</td>
<td>Chatham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esther No. 3</td>
<td>Hamilton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria No. 6</td>
<td>Windsor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willard No. 2</td>
<td>Detroit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martha No. 4</td>
<td>Grand Rapids</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

176 *Prince Hall Grand Chapter, Order of the Eastern Star*, 4.
177 Ibid.
Figure 15: Eastern Stars at Campbell A.M.E Church, August 11, 1954. Chatham-Kent Black Historical Society.
Though the women had "some autonomy in making decisions, such as choosing initiates," all Chapters of the OES had to have a Grand Patron, a male member of the Prince Hall Lodge, and a Grand Matron.178 These male members had to be at each OES meeting "in order to constitute a quorum."179 Another qualification that had to be met in order to become a member of the OES was some kind of "kinship relation to a Mason, which mean[t] that the Eastern Stars [were] the wives, widows, sisters, daughters, mothers, or granddaughters…of Masons."180

Needless to say, it is clear that the deeply gendered world these women lived in functioned as much within the Lodge as within the home. When asked about the persistence of the male presence within the OES meetings she attended in the 1960s, a former member from Chatham's OES responded:

NR …and the chapter is the woman's counterpart of the Lodge, the Order of the Eastern Star is. You have to have a Mason present, they have to see that you don't sway from Masonic code, and that kind of thing…

CP So there was a man present?

NR Well, you have to have, he's called the Worthy Patron, he's the male, and the woman is called the Worthy Matron, and chapter membership and all that, so you're under their umbrella, as you will…

CP Did women sit in on their meetings?

NR No, no. You can't. We couldn't do that. Women weren't allowed. And they had to be a member to sit in on ours, a Mason didn't just walk in. You had to be a member initiated into the Order of the Eastern Star. And it was quite an experience. I dealt with people from Montreal to Windsor, I had to visit all the chapters. [Name redacted] was the Grand Worthy Patron when I was the Grand Worthy Matron, and he had been for so long, we was…he was kind of controlling and the thing was they had control. And the women, at that time, only had control for the days of their meeting, which was probably 3 days a year, and I remember [the Grand Worthy Patron] trying to challenge me at something at Grand Chapter,

178 Brown, African American Fraternities and Sororities, 87.
179 Ibid.
180 Ibid.
and I think I told him, "Look, I got the gavel now." You know, and, but we never had any real big problems.\textsuperscript{181}

Clearly these were gendered spaces where some negotiation was possible.

The first Grand Patron of the OES Grand Chapter Province of Ontario and State of Michigan was Henry Weaver, while the first Grand Matron was Maria Hawkins of Detroit, Michigan. The Grand Patrons of the OES often consisted of those men who held leadership positions in Chatham’s black community and the Prince Hall Lodge, such as Josiah F. Scott, prominent Mason and the aforementioned Reverend James C. Richards. In 1894, due to “problems that had developed within the upper echelons of Masonry in Ontario and Michigan”, the Order split and a Grand Chapter of Ontario was created.\textsuperscript{182}

The OES was organized in the image of the established Order of Prince Hall Masons. Their organizational make up was almost identical; they too held Grand Communications and held various titles and offices. Grand Officer titles included: Grand Christian Flag Bearer, Grand Canadian Flag Bearer, Grand O.E.S Flag Bearer, Grand Chaplain East (and West), Grand Musician, Grand Marshal East (and West), Grand District Deputy, Grand Associate Conductress, Grand Parliamentarian, Grand Historian, Grand Sentinel, Grand Arts & Crafts, Grand, Assistant Treasurer, Grand Photographer, etc. Though they would change over time, there were approximately 36 Grand Officer titles; several often were held by the same individuals.

Given the significance of tradition within these Masonic orders, it may be fair to assume that many of their practices continued unchanged into the early to mid twentieth century. The beautifully hand written minute books that cover years 1924 to 1984 indicate that their activities were often supportive and subordinate in nature, though no less significant to the foundational mandate of Masonry or the OES. These minutes were recorded in large ledger books, double-

\textsuperscript{181}Name Redacted, interview by Carmen Poole, July 16, 2010.
\textsuperscript{182}Prince Hall Grand Chapter, Order of the Eastern Star, 4.
sided and single-spaced. The contents of these books describe their invaluable contributions to
the Lodge in various activities best described as gender normative; they included decorating the
men’s Prince Hall Lodge, and organizing bazaars and fundraisers to help support the
underprivileged of the community. They also made crafts, such as calendars and telephone book
covers, en masse to be sold by the individual Chapters; the proceeds were used for benevolent
purposes.\textsuperscript{183} From these records it is evident that they played a central role in caring for the ailing
and elderly. One member recalls:

For instance…you have to take care of your own membership, and you must do
benevolence, and I remember [name redacted] who’s a member of Electa chapter here in
Chatham, became ill and became hospitalized. I had to go feed her for a week, to support
the family and help them. It was the worst job I ever had, because she…was senile
certainly and it was very very very hard to do, and I don’t think I got two mouthfuls in
her because she would be giving me orders, tell them how they’re treating the people here
in Chatham, do this, and I’d run out …ok Sister…, run back…“You didn’t tell them!”
you know one of those things, she didn’t know, she wouldn’t have done this when she
was in her right mind for anything in the world, but I still was obligated to go there and
try to feed that woman and that’s what you did. Now people, young folk today, that’s a
long time ago, and I had kids and a husband at home to take care of and all and I still
walked to that hospital to feed that woman because I stood at an altar and said I would
DO it, obligations or things like that don’t mean much to some people, but some people
they do.\textsuperscript{184}

The women of the OES were also responsible for every aspect of the funeral
arrangements for Prince Hall and OES members who died. Page 9 of the Minute Book, dated
January 31, 1925 illustrates exactly how the women of the OES mobilized in the event of a
member’s (OES or Prince Hall Masonic) death. This particular meeting was organized to discuss
the arrangements for the funeral services of two members who had died on January 30\textsuperscript{th} and
January 31\textsuperscript{st}. The women organized the Condolence Committee, the Floral Committee, and the
Conveyances Committee. An order was carried to withdraw $15.00 from death dues for each
deceased member.

\textsuperscript{183} Name Redacted, interview by Carmen Poole, July 16, 2010.
\textsuperscript{184} Name Redacted, interview by Carmen Poole, July 16, 2010.
Another important role for a sister member was taking shifts “sitting up” or sitting vigil with the deceased member’s families. The “sitting in” task was shared by the members, who, either by themselves or with another member, were assigned a day where they would sit with the family in mourning. Members were also responsible for all thank you cards sent out on behalf of the family of the deceased. The Conveyance Committee was responsible for locating and acquiring vehicles to transport the family and those who wished to attend the funeral to and from the ceremony. In the minute book entry for February 5th, 1925, a motion was carried “that a letter of thanks be sent to those who loaned their cars for the funerals of our deceased sisters.”

These funeral-arranging entries were among the most common entries in the Minute Books. The following entry describes the process by which they would organize:

Chatham, Ont. March 20th 1925.

H.L. [Honored Lady} Mabel Davis R.M. [Royal Matron] stated the meeting was called to make arrangements for the funeral of the late H.L. Agnes Griffin who departed this life Fri. Mar. 20th at 5.50am Moved by Lena Lynn, seconded by H.L. E. Richardson that an order be drawn on Treasurer for Two dollars ($2.00) for two weeks sick dues for H.L. Griffin. Motion carried. R.M. appointed H. Ladies May Parker Florence Terrell and S. K. F. Robinson to secure conveyance for funeral. Moved by H.L. C. Lynn, seconded by H.L. M. Jenkins that an order be drawn on Treasurer for Fifteen dollars ($15.00) death fees for H.L. Agnes Griffin. H. Ladies Davis, Jackson, Terrell sit up Fri. night and H. Ladies C. Lynn and L. Lynn on Sat. night with the remains of H.L. Agnes Griffin. Meeting was called off at 8.50 to meet Sun. at 1.pm.

Upon the death of the well-known and well-respected J.C. Richards, the members of the OES crafted the following letter of condolence:

To the bereaved family of the late S.K. J.C Richards. We the undersigned committee of Electa Chapter #1 O.E.S. desire to extend to you our heart felt sorrow and deepest sympathy in the loss you have so recently sustained in the death of your beloved companion and our most prominent member and esteemed friend; and while in your private association you mourn the loss of a dear one’s sweet consoling voice, we as an organization mourn with you because he was one of the founders of our Order and we

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185 Minute book, 1925, 9-10.
186 Ibid., 15.
shall never more see his smiling face, received his able counsel nor hear his comforting words.

His death has created a vacancy which will be felt not only in the Chapter room but in our hearts. He has filled all the offices which were in our power to bestow—both in the Grand and subordinate Chapters which former Chapter he assisted in organizing in 1889. This man of noble mould has gone from earth. He wielded a mighty power for good as a member of our Chapter and as a man. Many have felt his personal influence on their hearts. Death has gained a barren victory over this servant of God. Truly a Prince, a great man as fallen in Israel.

We can hardly reconcile ourselves to the thought that his activities have ceased, that he has really passed away; but his departure tells us that one by one this chain of friendship will continue to be broken until there is not one left, all will have passed to the realms of bright glory to form one unbroken chain around the throne of the Grand Patron of the Universe.

We again offer our sympathy andcondole with you while you are thus burdened in your sore affliction; and we hope and trust you may be able to find solace through the medium of the comforting influence of Him, who hath said “I will be a Father to the fatherless and a husband to the widow.”

Rest on, oh thou departed on
Sing with those of flaming tongue
Thou a victory great has won,
And they joys have just begun.

This wonderfully crafted letter of condolence eloquently suggests the communal character these women possessed, as they emphasized the impact of the loss on the entire Order. Their tone was one of mourning and its Christian corollary: rejoicing in the return of a son to his Father.

Richards was revered within Chatham’s black community and the Masonic community; this letter served as a private tribute to a man whose life, talents, and faithfulness to his community exemplified the deeply held ideals of the Order.

The Minute Book also contains all of the mundane minutaie common to these types of organizations. It was here where the women learned and became proficient in Robert's Rules of Order. There were secretary and treasurer reports, often concerned with the purchasing of stationary and new sashes, the management of dues, bill payments, the organizing of “dainty”
lunches and “Lawn Socials”, the writing and distribution of cook books and memory books, and the election of officers.

Moral standards also were necessary in order to join the OES; ones similar to those of the male Lodge. An “Investigating Committee,” was struck whose exacting standards served to maintain a very specific definition of acceptability on the part of the petitioner. As part of their mandate or “Obligations”, members of the OES were expected to “inspire every member to become a better person,” and “have strength of character, forbearance and kindness in [their] hearts.” Their “Obligation” was “a solemn pledge—a binding promise—given not only to [their] chapter, but to God and [their] better self.”

Other qualities expected of every female member of the Order included courage (“to do what is right”), discretion (“showing wise control over one’s actions and especially one’s speech” and as “a virtue which should be practiced in our daily life…[to] keep the faith and confidence of our friends, family and business associates), and obedience (“to rules and vows…all vows—to ourselves—our family—our country---and our God”). Members were to be “comforting and considerate” to all within, and outside of, the Order. The “Obligation” is ultimately a pledge of service, as the following statement makes clear:

Discretion, obedience, and kindness are terms which include many other virtues—charity, truth, and love in particular—and you are judged by the way you practice these virtues, -- by the way you live you obligation. If your influence is for good, for higher ideals and for a true spirit of charity and brotherhood and sisterhood, then you are living your obligation to your Order and helping to make this world a better world. Our duties to each other are simply labors of love.

The women who participated in the OES were also concerned with exhibiting the characteristics of respectable black womanhood in a society that largely denied the possibility of

187 OES Declaration, “Our Obligation.”
188 Ibid.
189 Ibid.
its existence. The appeal to middle-class ideals helped ameliorate their "reputation, ensure social mobility, and create a positive image for their communities. To be respectable was an identity that any African American [or Canadian] could embrace, whatever his or her economic standing." 190 This was true in Chatham as well. Yet while the middle-class ideal promoted by the Lodge and the Order may have been an economic reality for several families, given the employment restrictions placed on blacks in the city into the 1900s it is likely that a number of OES women had to work in some capacity beyond the realm of the private sphere. As will be discussed in the following chapter, it was also during this time that Chatham's East End began taking on a racialized and increasingly negative character, which would also prove to reflect poorly on its more "respectable" residents. As such, these fraternal orders took on even greater meaning. The following excerpt from an interview of a former member of the OES provides a singular example of the type of treatment black women encountered in the city, how they interpreted it, and how they responded:

One night, we [3 black women] come out of there [a building] and white people and white kids thought they could come down to the east end and do whatever they wanted and one night we were walking home, it wasn't real late, and this car, with two or three white kids in it, they weren't old, I don't know how old they would have been, they come up to us and stopped and was talking stupid. [One of my friends] just went over and grabbed the driver by the throat, and said you listen here you son of a… and named him and everything else. When she let him go, that car flew out of there, just like, you know? That's what it was like, living here very early, you know, they didn't regard…

…Just smart talk, um, you know they just acting smart, acting like we were pick-ups or something like that. That's all. I mean, they were men maybe, young men, and that's…I wasn't probably 25…I don't know. That's what it was like in the East End. White people come down here, the bootleggers were here I guess, and they thought they could do anything.

Well if a white man drives up trying to pick you up… it was harassment, we didn't hail him or anything, so you know, and that's what you know, the behaviour was. 191

191 Name Redacted, interview by Carmen Poole, July 16, 2010.
It would have been about four or five years after this incident that the interviewee would submit her name to the OES for consideration. Rather than being viewed as an "innately licentious," uneducated and unrefined permanent underclass, through their participation in the OES, black women insisted on an alternate conception of their capacity for not only more refined pursuits, but also those that helped the less fortunate and contributed to the building of communal bonds.\textsuperscript{192} It is no coincidence that charity, "once a hallmark of respectability," was as fundamental to the OES as it was to an ideal middle-class sensibility.\textsuperscript{193}

\textsuperscript{192} Wolcott, \textit{Remaking Respectability}, 6.
\textsuperscript{193} Ibid., 165.
Figure 16: Eastern Stars with John Robinson (Grand Master) and Winston Clark (Grand Chaplain). Chatham-Kent Black Historical Society.
Conclusion:

You know what I think? Now, not that they were perfect, but some of our best people in the community that I've researched and read about and hear about and everything...were members of the Lodge.\textsuperscript{194}

There is no question that the members of the Prince Hall Masonic Lodge and the Order of the Eastern Star helped shape Chatham's black history. They helped build the schools, broaden the influence of the churches, and establish black owned businesses that served the often-alienated blacks in the city. One interviewee recounted a story she had heard about how her father, who was not a Mason, was able to purchase their home:

they said the only people who had money were people who were in the Masons…what they would do was put out money so people could get homes, so my father got his home on [redacted] street because of that. They were willing to back him up, cause you couldn't get loans back then. I remember hearing that story.\textsuperscript{195}

There is no way to determine how many lives they touched through their benevolent works. Though they were devoted to ceremony, tradition, structure, and obedience, their primary commitment to charitable acts were informed by a devout obligation to their community. Certainly their class interests may have placed them in conflict with those who did not share their views, and in certain cases, it is likely they may have been looked upon as elitist and as socially oppressive as whites. Whatever their views and methods, however, their class ambitions helped marshal the aspirations and material means used to not only benefit blacks in the city, but also to help build parts of that city that remain significant, historically and contemporarily.

Unfortunately, their influence has faded. Though Chatham's St. John's Lodge remained robust throughout the twentieth century, the OES in Chatham was not so lucky. Due to relocation, death, lack of interest and investment, and the fact that these organizations cannot actively recruit

\textsuperscript{194} Gwendolyn Robinson, interview by Carmen Poole, May 24, 2012.
\textsuperscript{195} S. Weam, interview by Carmen Poole, Chatham, ON, August 18th 2010.
new members, the erosion of community, dwindling church membership, and a modern lack of interest in fraternal organizations has heavily affected these types of societies. An interviewee offers another potential explanation for the decline that is specific to the Chatham context:

there were a lot of people there that were very active. We had a large membership and in Chatham here, but it’s gradually, and what I see happen, Carmen: white people come along with their social groups and when they started taking us in, some of us run quick as we could to them and let our own down, and I’m sure it happened in other places, but not everybody equates things like I did. I watched the things that were going on, and I hope I never left my own… when you own something you don’t give it up. They OWNED Woodstock building, they OWNED that property and when the powers that be…who owns it now? City…and all…you know and it’s sad.¹⁹⁶

This observation identifies mounting disaffection as one of the catalysts for the overall deterioration in organizational participation and pride of place among blacks. Despite the thriving nineteenth century foundation upon which these men and women sought to establish their community, its twentieth century decline would have long lasting consequences for the history and memory of Chatham's early black community.

¹⁹⁶ Name Redacted, interview by Carmen Poole, July 16, 2010.
Chapter 4:

"The bad odour comes, I think, from what we do not see:"
Chatham's Black Population in the 'Post Exodus' Era

The flood of the eighteen fifties was reversed; the exodus began. The population was depleted to such a degree that by 1900 there were no more than a few hundred blacks in Toronto and southwestern Ontario.¹

Daniel Hill and Arnold Bruner wrote this passage about the return of blacks to the United States after the Civil War in a national newspaper celebrating the 350th anniversary of "Blacks in Canada." Often described as "a mass departure," the term exodus has been widely applied when describing the impact of American emancipation on the black population in Canada. This chapter will assess the reality of the post-emancipation exodus and discuss the impact of the decline of Chatham's black population into the twentieth century by looking at the creation of Chatham's East End and the physical erasure of black history through the destruction of its most real and symbolically important structures. It will argue that in the absence of centralized efforts to continue and/or maintain and/or consolidate a collective identity, the black population in Chatham suffered a dislocation that affected its ability and desire to act as a racially driven (or racially bound) collective.

Hill and Bruner's assumption was that Canada had never become home to the fugitive and free blacks that had come to Canada seeking freedom and equality. It was American slavery that kept blacks in Canada, and it was its abolition that influenced their return to their true home. Some who claim that the return was due to the desire to reunite with family offer a particularly salient reason for egress. In light of the professional character and socioeconomic class of some blacks that had moved to Chatham specifically, another reason for leaving was to assist in a new

enterprise: to lead the reconstruction of the United States as the managers of the educational and
domestic settlement of millions of newly emancipated blacks. As members of the black literati
and entrepreneurial class, their returning to the United States would be less about leaving Canada
(though Canada had fallen far short of its widely celebrated ideal) and more about personal
aspirations and a desire to contribute to the reshaping of a new republic. In The Journey from
Tollgate to Parkway: African Canadians in Blacks in Hamilton, Adrienne Shadd makes a makes
a similar argument:

[s]ome exiles in the African-American community who wished to reunite with long-lost
relatives and friends back in the United States took a "return trip on the Underground Railroad." For the educated elite, it was also an opportunity to assist in the massive
undertaking that was needed in the education and resettling of newly freed slaves during
Reconstruction.²

Still others could argue that blacks returned to the United States to escape white Canadian
racism for something more familiar.³ The argument that "by the end of the war most of the
fugitives had returned to the United States" is not altogether false, as the numbers of blacks in
Canada declined.⁴ While it may be true that "the exodus was large" when considering Canada
West as a whole, we need more specificity when it comes to the exodus' impact on specific
towns and villages.⁵ We are often reminded that "Blacks have never made up a significant
element of Canada's ethnic population" and that the number of blacks had never increased
beyond "about 2 percent" nationally.⁶ That they never made up a large percentage of Canada's

² Adrienne Shadd, The Journey From Tollgate to Parkway: African Canadians in Hamilton (Toronto: Natural
Heritage Book, 2010), 164-165.
³ Naomi Pabst, ""Mama, I'm Walking to Canada:' Black Geopolitics and Invisible Empires," in Globalization and
Race: Transformations in the Cultural Production of Blackness, Kamari Maxine Clarke and Deborah A. Thomas eds,
⁴ Joseph F. Krauter and Morris Davis, Minority Canadians: Ethnic Groups (Toronto: Methuen, 1978),
44; George Hendrick and Willene Hendrick, Black Refugees in Canada: Accounts of
⁵ Hendrick and Hendrick. Black Refugees in Canada., 18.
⁶ Martin N. Marger. Race and Ethnic Relations: American and Global Perspectives (California: Wadsworth
Cengage Learning, 2012), 455.
population says nothing of their significance on a local level. While by its design Chatham was not an all-black settlement proportionally, and given the size of the town, blacks' presence in the city would have always been evident. A population count tells us that the black population in Chatham decreased from 1,258 in 1861 to 937 in 1871. While there would have been some impact on the small town, the departure of 321 people, or 25 per cent of the black population, does not constitute a mass exodus. This is remarkably similar to the numbers Adrienne Shadd found in her assessment of blacks in Hamilton, Ontario.

By 1871, the Black population in Hamilton proper was 354…This represented a reduction of 29 percent in the city. While certainly a significant drop in the numbers, it was not the vast return trek of all African Hamiltonians back to the United States that historians have traditionally represented as taking place during this period.\(^7\)

The black population in Chatham declined steadily into the twentieth century; however, the number of blacks in Chatham never fell below the oft-quoted national average of 2 per cent. By 1911, even at its lowest, blacks still made up close to 5% of the total population of Chatham.

Table 7: Chatham Population-Total and Total Black\(^8\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>Total Black Population</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1861</td>
<td>4417</td>
<td>1258</td>
<td>28.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1871</td>
<td>5753</td>
<td>937</td>
<td>16.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>7879</td>
<td>814</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>9068</td>
<td>689</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>10,766</td>
<td>528</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8: Chatham Population-Total Percent Increase and Total Black Decrease

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Percent Increase: Total Population</th>
<th>Percent Decrease: Total Black Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1861-1871</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>-25.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1871-1881</td>
<td>36.9</td>
<td>-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881-1901</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901-1911</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>-23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^7\) Shadd, *Blacks in Hamilton*, 165.

The largest decrease in Chatham's black population occurred in the decades 1861-1871 and 1901-1911. This does not indicate a steady decline but rather two substantial outflows of the black population. Whereas the 25 per cent loss in the black population between 1861 and 1871 could have resulted from the Emancipation Proclamation, the comparable "exodus" of 23 per cent of the population between 1901 and 1911 could not reasonably be attributed to immediate post-Civil War factors.

Dates of immigration can also be used to complicate what we have assumed about the movement of blacks across the border in the post-Civil War period. Out of the 689 black residents listed in the 1901 census for the Town of Chatham, only 125 listed their date of immigration. While the range of immigration dates ranged from as early as 1844 to as late as 1901, of those who listed their date of immigration the average was 1870. The 13th Amendment made slavery illegal in 1865, and given that emancipation is often the only reason given for the "mass exodus" of blacks returning to the United States from Canada West, it is interesting that there is evidence that suggests that blacks continued to enter into Canada in the post-Civil War era.

Table 9: Dates of Immigration, Number of Blacks Arriving, 1901

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Number of Blacks Arriving</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between 1841-1860 (inclusive)</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 1861-1870 (inclusive)</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 1871-1880 (inclusive)</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 1881-1891 (inclusive)</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 1891-1901 (inclusive)</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Admittedly, seeing as this is only a response rate of 18 percent, I am not suggesting that it is representative, and am only using this calculation to complicate the narrative that freed and escaped blacks arrived circa 1850s and returned immediately after emancipation.
It appears that from those few who responded, the same number (48) immigrated between 1871-1901 as did in the era 1841-1860. Though these numbers cannot be viewed as representative of the entire black population, it is interesting to note that these numbers indicate that there were pull factors to the area that had nothing to do with escaping slavery, and that the post-emancipation arrival of blacks to the area indicates that the state of slavery in the United States did not solely determine when and where blacks entered.

Similarly, though only 104 people out of the 527 listed as black in the 1911 census gave their date of immigration, the average date listed was 1878 (ranging from 1829-1911). Again, though the number of respondents is meager it is important to note that the number of blacks coming to Chatham between 1901 and 1911 is very nearly the same as all those who claim to have arrived prior to 1860. These are not to be understood as trends; however, they are interruptions in the narrative that insists on simplifying not only the motivations, but also the movements of blacks in, out and across, the border.

Table 10: Dates of Immigration, Number of Blacks Arriving, 1911

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Blacks Arriving</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before 1840</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Between 1841-1860</strong></td>
<td><strong>30</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 1861-1870</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 1871-1880</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 1881-1900</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Between 1901-1911</strong></td>
<td><strong>27</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The exodus narrative has had a profound impact on black Canadian historiography. It has had an even greater impact on Chatham's local history. The latter simultaneously highlighted mid-nineteenth century black history, particularly to Chatham's role in the Underground Railroad, while ignoring the enduring black presence into the twentieth century. As the following discussion suggests, there were real consequences to the late nineteenth century departure of
Chatham's black elite. Was the waning of a distinct black collectivity into the twentieth century a result of the reduced number of blacks, or proof that the previous generations' ethos of self-reliance, assimilationism, and anti-black-nationalism was ultimately effective?

Efforts to prove themselves respectable, successful, and productive members of Chatham society notwithstanding, the lives of blacks in Chatham remained constrained and shaped by systemic racism. Race determined where an individual could work, as will be discussed in Chapter Five, and it would also determine in large part where an individual could live. The East End began in the mid-nineteenth century as the commercial and industrial core of the city; only later did it become an area of the city sown in and shaped by the classist and racist policies of the city and its white inhabitants. Itself a remarkable testament to community, the East End of Chatham provides a fascinating entry into understanding the ways in which space becomes racialized and the manner in which the individuals who occupy those spaces respond to civic, social, and economic marginalization.  

By the early twentieth century, the East End had already been locally characterized as "the wrong side of the tracks," due largely to the values assigned to real and imagined racial and socio-economic differences. The black and white residents who lived in the East End lived in what can be described as an increasingly depressed area, whose residents' quality of life was of little concern to the rest of the city. The economic and aesthetic improvement within the rest of the city relied upon the systemic underdevelopment of the East End.

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11 F. Bayn interview by Carmen Poole, Chatham, ON, June 16, 2010.
As Chatham grew into the twentieth century, residents of the East End, having lost the social and political connections they may have maintained in the late-nineteenth century, often failed to counter the opinions and civic wishes of those who could afford to live in and defend the interests of other parts of the city. A series of articles from *The Chatham Daily News* (1900-1980) can be used to illustrate the process by which the geography and atmosphere of the East End of Chatham was constructed as undesirable. These newspaper articles suggest that there was a concerted effort to place less desirable, though perhaps necessary, industries in the East End of the city. As expressed tersely by interviewee A. Rosey, a lifetime resident of the East End: "they felt they could do anything they wanted in the East End." These articles provide a glimpse into how civic policies worked to devalue certain spaces over time, in a way that would impact the future identity of the East End, black life, and the survival of historical memory in Chatham, Ontario. This is not to say the inhabitants of the East End failed to protest what the city was doing. However, their voices, as devalued by the rest of the city as the properties themselves, lacked the social and political power to counter the prevailing and privileged perspectives that would determine what would happen in their backyards.

Not only did the placing of certain industries in this area determine the character of this particular city space, but the destruction, demolition, and decay made possible by officials' conscious disregard, the passage of certain bylaws, and residents' lack of means contributed to the loss of historical space and sites of historical memory. Taken together, the East End of Chatham, once a city space of affluence, influence, and historical significance, was redesigned to become a space of marginality. In this way the East End was impoverished spatially, economically, and historically by powerful whites who believed that the East End space and the

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12 A. Rosey interview by Carmen Poole, June 15, 2010.
working-class whites, immigrants and African Canadians who resided in it could not thrive, by virtue of their race and/or class, and were therefore worthy of neglect and contempt.

**Racialized Spaces:**

![Image of King Street (East)](image)

Figure 17: "Historical copies, downtown, King Street looking east, King Street." Chatham-Kent Museum 1990.77.3758.
By the turn of the century, a number of the more affluent and outspoken members of Chatham's black community had left the city. The remaining members of Chatham's black East End consequently became even more vulnerable to disenfranchisement, because white officials perceived them as politically negligible. Where power in numbers might have been possible when blacks made up close to 30 percent of the population in 1860, by 1901 blacks made up only 7.6 percent of the population. The black population of Chatham in 1901 was larger than the

Figure 18: "Historical copies, downtown, King Street looking west, King Street."
Chatham-Kent Museum 1990.77.3759.
national average, which has always, it seems, hovered around 2 percent, and it was by no means negligible in a town of only 9068 people. However, it was obvious that certain members of the black elite, outspoken, moneyed, and political and socially active, had vacated the city. What "power in numbers" that had existed in the middle of the nineteenth century was all but lost.

That black people had been living in the East End of Chatham since it was known as the "black man's Paris" in the middle of the nineteenth century is certain. However, during that time blacks also had been spread across other parts of the city. By 1911, however, as evident in the census, the deliberate racial character of certain areas was conspicuous. The 1911 district census, for example, contains sixteen sub-districts in total. The vast majority of blacks in Chatham lived in the 44th, 48th, 49th, and 54th sub-districts, areas that extended to the eastern most periphery of the East End. These districts included Duke Street, Wellington Street, Princess Street, Scane Street, Foster Street, Colborne Street, Murray Street, Hyslop Street, Park Avenue East, Degge Street, King Street East, and Prince Street. Underscoring the racial delimitation of the city, sub-district 53, north of the Thames River, which includes Chatham Street, Thames Street, Grant Street, Grand Ave, Victoria, Barthe Street, James Street, Dover Street, Kent Street, Emma Street, and St. Clair Avenue, did not contain a single black household. Sub-district 50 contained only two black households, an individual live-in domestic, and Chatham's Lorne Avenue Home of the Friendless, which contained six black "inmates." Sub-district 50 covered areas in the western part of the city and included Raleigh Street, Cross Street, Harvey Street, Lacroix Street, West Street, Richmond Street, parts of Wellington West and Lorne Avenue. Sub-district 47, covered the area including St. Clair Avenue, Joseph Street, Maple Street, Selkirk Street, Amelia Street, Grand Avenue, Hilliyard Street, and Llydican Street. This district was home to a single mixed race household (Irish husband, "Negro" wife), and Grace Browning, my maternal great-grandmother,
who was a live-in domestic at the age of 13. Sub-districts 43, 45, 46, 53, 55 and 56 follow similar patterns of sparse black residency, and it was often these areas where black live-in domestic workers, rather than black households, predominated.

Despite being quite well known by Chatham blacks, known or publicized incidents of historically racist real estate practices in the city are difficult to document. Twentieth-century examples can be gleaned from personal experiences, as evidenced in an interview conducted August 19, 2010, where M. Craig recalled an incident where his brother attempted to find a place to rent in the city:

Yes, I know an instance my brother went to look at a place, it was…over on Wellington West, right at the very end. It was an old apartment building, probably one of the oldest, probably the oldest in Chatham, apartment building. He had called about it and this place was for rent and all of a sudden it wasn't for rent anymore. I told my brother, I says, "I'd have, I've made that known, well known," I says, "I wouldn't have stopped there," whether I got the place or not, so I would have brought that to the media in a New York minute if I'd had known, like if it would have been me. He didn't want to do anything, it was his business, it was his dust up, I guess, but he just let it go. I'd have had a hard time doing that, cause I thought, when they cash the check the money is green…

Similarly, in our June 17th 2010 interview, B. Metts describes what it was like when her son tried to secure an apartment:

…he paid his month up front, he seen the apartment, he works…he had a work history, yet they've got people in there [the apartment building] that don't work, so we couldn't understand why he got turned down. We could not for the life of us figure out why he was turned down, they didn't give him a reason. But he should have got it, they stereotype them and he didn't get it.

Expressing his personal experience with subtle racism, P. Kingly claimed that when he attempted to purchase a home for his growing family in a "white" area, the realtor "said something [that] somebody in the neighbourhood, an old woman said something, but he didn't elaborate. At the

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13 M. Craig interview by Carmen Poole, August 19, 2010.
14 B. Metts interview by Carmen Poole, June 17, 2010.
Such systemic discrimination often operates just below the radar. One supposes that if comparable attempts to live on the north end of town had been thwarted, individuals seeking housing would eventually have resigned themselves to live where forces dictated. This should not be constructed as weakness, so much as rational behaviour based on the lived realities of a particular time and space. Spatially, environmentally, and socio-economically, the East End of Chatham was constructed as being black and as poor, whether or not all of the residents who lived there represented either (or both) of those characteristics. Despite the lack of documents that attest to overtly racist housing practices, the complexion of these city sub-districts was far from being a coincidence; it is highly unlikely that blacks chose to live together solely out of respect for and enjoyment of their shared racial characteristics.

As certain industries moved into Chatham in the early twentieth century, their choice of the East End was largely due to its location along the city's waterways. Its mixed zoning was simultaneously commercial, industrial, and residential, which set it apart from more desirable residential parts of town. As well, property for sale or rent in other parts of town was largely closed to blacks, less a matter of legalized segregation and more as a matter of custom. The East End of King Street would deteriorate considerably into the twentieth century, the tracks that line its boundary becoming more and more pronounced in their meaning each proceeding year. The East End was "experienced"; its aesthetic was and is distinct, you "knew" when you were "crossing the tracks." It was as physical a boundary as it was metaphorical. There was a distinct way that the "rest" of the city experienced and constructed this particular part of town. The perception was such that the East End was marked by and blamed on the black bodies (and poor bodies) that lived within it in. For example, in her discussion of black women's occupational patterns in Chatham in "'Whatever You Raise in the Ground You Can Sell it in Chatham': Black

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15 P. Kingly interview by Carmen Poole, November 10, 2010.
Women in Buxton and Chatham, 1850-65," Peggy Bristow states rather matter-of-factly that women likely "did day work, as their place of residence is recorded as the east end of Chatham, where the Black population lived…" Similarly, in Race on Trial: Black Defendants in Ontario's Criminal Courts, 1858-1958, Barrington Walker's description of a murder case involving a black defendant includes a discussion about how "the dissolute environment of east-end Chatham [was] a mitigating factor", that the court proceedings included "a fair amount of commentary on the east end of [Chatham] as a 'hot spot,' a site of intraclass interracial conflict…” and that "[t]he idea of east-end Chatham as a 'dangerous area' had even more salience than dominant notions of the dangers posed by the bodies of Black men." Despite these salient characterizations, the creating of this East End space has not been fully analyzed as a place that was shaped by particularly partial (and racists) municipal, social, political, or economic practices.

In August 1900, East End residents and businesses lodged complaints against the Grand Trunk Railway and Canadian Pacific Railway about the transportation of hogs across and through their neighborhood. The rail lines in Chatham had carved a path around the East End, penning it in physically as well as visually. During the latter part of the nineteenth century, King Street had been a growing commercial area, with industries being built along the Thames River. That the rail lines were laid across and along King Street East was certainly the result of commercial and industrial pragmatism. However, that the area also became a residential space was also the consequence of some social, political, and economic expediency. The "hog issue" that arose in the summer of 1900 illustrates how apathy and institutional privilege worked together to negatively impact the East End.

17 Barrington Walker, Race on Trial: Black Defendants in Ontario's Criminal Courts, 1858-1958(Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 68-69.
Dr. William Robert Hall, a white physician working in Chatham and city Medical Health Officer (MHO), reported in 1900 that Chatham had been declared free of disease. However, complaints of odors from citizens who lived near the tracks on the East End suggests that the city was going to have to confront the railroads concerning the management of their cargo. The MHO confirmed to the city council that "[t]he odor from the shipping pens for the hogs at the G.T.R. and the C.P.R [sic]…certainly are a menace to public health and a damage to adjoining property."\(^{18}\) The MHO was the first to suggest that the hog pens be moved beyond the city line, though how far outside the city he did not specify. Limited in his role as MHO and knowing that a Health Officer did not possess the authority to determine what the railroad agents did, the MHO advised "that the matter be referred to" council "immediately."\(^{19}\) Another Health Inspector, J.R. Gutridge [sic], provided additional detail about the hog pen situation plaguing the residents of the East End. Mr. Gutridge concurred with the citizens' determination that the "hogs [are] making a bad stench," and that "there is a stench that arises from hogs while shipping."\(^{20}\) Specifically, Mr. Gutridge informed council that "[a]t times there are from 200 to 300 hogs in the pens," and that when the pens are flushed out "they get into the gutter and over it flows and runs out of the pens into the yards," where they have been finding dead sheep and hogs on the property.\(^{21}\) Across the Thames, residents had been finding dead dogs, dead cats and dead chickens, and one wonders whether the attention paid to this situation was only due to the impact of the hog pens on other parts of the city.\(^{22}\) The Health Inspector informed council that they had already cleaned "204 outbuildings" and that he was waiting for additional reports from

\(^{18\text{ }}\)"The City is Free From Disease: A Gratifying Report from the Medical Health Officer-The Hog Pens at the GTR and CPE Again Causing Trouble, May have to be Outside the City," *The Evening Banner*, August 7, 1900, 4.

\(^{19\text{ }}\)"The City is Free From Disease," 4.

\(^{20\text{ }}\)Ibid.

\(^{21\text{ }}\)Ibid.

\(^{22\text{ }}\)Ibid.
"scavengers", or city workers.\textsuperscript{23} Given the reports made by the MHO and the Health Inspector, Mr. Pritchard, agent for the railway, "thought that a joint pen should be built for shipping, outside the city."\textsuperscript{24} The matter, as it was revealed, would become the responsibility of city council,\textsuperscript{25} as "the Property Committee had recommended the Council to refer the matter of hog pens back to the Board of Health for them to consult with the Provincial authorities. The Council carried out the Committee's suggestion."\textsuperscript{26}

A month later, the Health Inspector presented a follow-up report to council stating he found the outsides of the G.T.R hog pens "damp at all times," all while the "floors of the pen are perfectly dry." He also reminded council that the stench that followed the shipping containers continued to be a nuisance. He informed council that "[e]leven dead hogs [were] taken out of the pens...and [f]ifty-three cess pools [had] been cleaned out, which run from 2 to 9 barrels," and that job was not yet complete. Interestingly, the Health Inspector admitted in his published report that he had to disinfect "houses and offices by direction of the Medical Health Officer," but was told not to put that detail in his report for fear that it would "create unnecessary alarm and interfere with business."\textsuperscript{27}

A newspaper report concerning a petition in 1900 against the railroads illustrates another way that the black residents suffered from the railroad traffic in the East End. That local industries and businesses were also affected by railroad traffic underscores the idea that indifference about East End spaces was not always limited to its residential inhabitants. Also occurring in 1900, the petition presented to council concerned the Lake Erie, Essex and Detroit River Railway line (L.E. &D.R.R) that travelled the Pere Marquette Railroad, which cut across

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{25} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{26} "Hogs, Diphtheria and Consumption," \textit{The Evening Banner, September 6, 1900}, 4.
\textsuperscript{27} "Hogs, Diphtheria and Consumption," 4.
Colborne Street. The "ratepayers" of Colborne Street sent a petition to council concerning the "conduct of the L.E.&D.R.", a reportedly habitual occurrence that indicates residents in the East End had routine run-ins with the railroads due to the latter's inability to coexist respectfully.\textsuperscript{28} The city council report in \textit{The Evening Banner} stated that the petition was "easily settled," though the council minutes fail to indicate in what way the matter was settled, other than informing the railroads that they should reconsider the manner by which they conducted themselves when travelling through the city.\textsuperscript{29} Colborne Street had the distinct privilege of being a crossing between the C.P.R and L.E.& D.R. lines and that the L.E. & D.R. line was being used "as a switch, or alding…and as a yard for the holding of rolling stock."\textsuperscript{30} As a result,

Colborne street, itself, at the last city limit where said spur crosses it is frequently blocked for hours at a time, and Duke street where said spur crosses it is also similarly blocked to the great inconvenience of the public traffic and so that the said streets and particularly Colborne street is rendered practically useless as a highway from Harwich into Chatham.\textsuperscript{31}

The social and political positions of those who signed the petition vary, but a common interest prevailed. While there is no indication as to who initiated the petition, it appears as though at least two out of the fifteen petitioners represented industrial and commercial interests. One of the signers, the T. H. Taylor Company, which owned a "carding mill and dyeing works" and was "widely known for [its] quality" textiles, was located on William Street.\textsuperscript{32} Despite itself being guilty of polluting the local waterways with "the varied colors [from the mill's dye] periodically tinging the creek," the owners of the mill likely signed the petition because the traffic obstruction would have had a negative impact on their business operations and complicate

\textsuperscript{28} "The City Council," \textit{The Evening Banner}, September 18, 1900, 4.
\textsuperscript{29} "The City Council," 4.
\textsuperscript{30} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{31} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{32} Victor Lauriston, \textit{Romantic Kent: The Story of a County 1626-1952} (Chatham, ON: County of Kent & City of Chatham, 1952), 528-529.
their customers' access to the property.\textsuperscript{33} In a similar fashion, Charles S. Mount, an Irish hotelkeeper, probably signed the petition out of business interests.

Out of the fifteen signers, it is possible to determine that at least six were black residents actually living on the street. Julia Ramsey was in her late 60s at the time she signed the petition and was listed in the 1901 census as the head of her household. Based on the two lodgers listed in her household it was probably a boarding house. Lewis Brady, who was in his late 50s when he signed the petition, had been a resident of Chatham since 1861 and worked as a "Street Labourer." John R. Johnson was a 43-year-old plasterer who lived on Colborne Street proper with his wife, 4 sons and 2 daughters, all of whom would likely have been disturbed by the trains. Emanuel Jones, a 49-year-old janitor, had been living in Chatham for almost 30 years, and Perry F. Chase, who was 68 at the time, had been living in Chatham for close to 40 years and worked as a railroad porter. An "N. Murray" also signed the petition: he may have been Nathaniel Murray, successful businessman, shoe maker and owner of the Murray Block on William Street, though he is not listed in the 1901 census. It is certain that having the trains stop for hours on their street would seriously impact their quality of life. There is no indication that anything was done about the matter outside of the creation of a "committee to investigate the matter."\textsuperscript{34} As will be discussed subsequently, when Chatham's city council created "committees to investigate…matters," no action resulted. Despite the inactivity on the part of council, this petition clearly illustrates that the shared irritation and common desire to maintain some quality of life in the East End resulted in a communal initiative to fight the industrial impact on their backyards.

\textsuperscript{33} Lauriston, \textit{Romantic Kent}, 529.
\textsuperscript{34}"The City Council," 4.
There were numerous other irritations that affected the day-to-day lives of East End residents. For example, road quality was a constant issue, as was the necessity of "street sprinklers." Given the nature of dirt roads in the summer, a street sprinkler would travel the city to wet the roads to reduce the dust and debris that would come from use of the street. As King Street was the commercial and business district of the city, it was, by all indications, sprinkled regularly. However, Alderman George Stephens' report to "the Board of Works [that] the street sprinkler could not sprinkle the east end of King street," suggests that not only were East End streets neglected but that a formal appeal to city council was necessary to address the issue.35 The Council responded positively to the request; the "chairman of the committee addressed? replied that he wou'd see that the street was sprinkled."36

Two years later, the "Hog Pen Nuisance" returned. It was reported to the city council in 1902 that

[n]othing has been done by the GTR people to abate the hog nuisance there. The cold, wet weather made it less apparent for a time, but Saturday and yesterday, with not less than 75 hogs in the pens, the odor was very bad. Promises have been made by the superintendent, after visiting the place and looking over the grounds, but nothing was done.37

It was recommended that a bylaw should be enacted that would limit the number of hogs kept in a pen within city limits be restricted to no more than four.38 The same railroad agent from the 1900 report, Mr. Pritchard, attempted to haggle on behalf of the railroad asking if, in the event that the hogs were well maintained, they could be kept within the city. Council found that under no circumstances could the hog pens be kept in the city and that they would have to be moved.39

36 Ibid.
38 Ibid.
39 Ibid.
The bylaw was created and it was resolved that "the secretary notify the three railroads that are violating the bylaw…and that they be notified to remove their pens outside" the city.\textsuperscript{40}

It is unclear how closely this bylaw was followed by the railroad companies, or how strictly the bylaw was enforced on behalf of the East End residents. However, it may be fair to suggest that, given subsequent events occurring on "the wrong side of the tracks," these bylaws were only applied where they benefitted the city. In this particular case, given that Chatham was the envy of the surrounding villages insofar as it thrived at the literal crossroads of economic progress and expansion, it is unlikely that the city would consider alienating industry in favour of a "few" complaints from a few individuals.

Despite the ongoing hog pen and rail-switch issue, the City of Chatham had learned little in terms of respecting quality of life on the East End. Thirty-four years later on December 16, 1936, 34 years later, \textit{The Chatham Daily News} published a front-page article entitled: "East End Residents Make Objections to Piggery Within Limits of City."

The article reported that fifty taxpayers living in the East End had signed and delivered a petition to city council requesting "immediate action to be taken to oust a piggery allegedly established within the city limits."\textsuperscript{41} The term "allegedly" is questionable, as the piggery was "located at the corner of Park Avenue east and Hyslop street," at the eastern limit of the East End of Chatham and clearly within city limits.\textsuperscript{42} The inhabitants complained that "the piggery and the swill being boiled for the pigs, form a distinct nuisance," and that many of their homes were located "within 100 feet from the hog pens."\textsuperscript{43}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{41} "East End Residents Make Objections to Piggery Within Limits of City," \textit{The Chatham Daily News}, December 16, 1936, 1.
\textsuperscript{42} "East End Residents Make Objections," 1.
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid.
\end{flushleft}
In a turn of events that epitomizes adding insult to injury, just two weeks later, *The Chatham Daily News* publicized the arrival of a new factory to the city. Out of sheer ingenuity and business acumen, the new factory, Darling Co. of Canada Ltd. (locally known as "Darlings"), located on the property of a defunct distillery "at the end of Park St. near the Pere Marquette tracks," was in the business of "rendering fats, producing lard and greases of various forms."\(^{44}\) The superintendent of the Darling Company of Chicago told the paper that the move to Chatham was made because they had been buying local meat products from the city, but processing them in Detroit.\(^{45}\) When they decided to expand their operations in Canada, Chatham appeared to be the logical choice.\(^{46}\) The Darling plant continued the city's practice of insisting that the East End was the ideal location for offensive and environmentally questionable industries and practices, as the original plant location had been an abattoir until the Wilson Packing Company turned it into a meatpacking plant (it later would become a distillery for a short time). Originally expecting about twelve to fifteen jobs from the factory, by 1964 Darlings employed approximately 70 employees. The prospect of bringing jobs and industry to Chatham seemingly blinded the city's municipal leaders from seeing the road ahead: a three-story rendering plant and tannery placed in a residential corner of a small town known for its hot and humid summers.

Darlings' mark on the city remains notorious, and the simple question "do you remember Darlings", garners an affirmative response of disgust from recent interviewees. The common complaint was that at certain times of the year, especially in summer, one could smell Darlings on the far side of town. Margaret Gunning, a one-time Chatham resident who grew up on Victoria Avenue, provides a vivid description of Darlings:

And then there was Darlings, the most hideous smell in the world. This was most

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\(^{45}\) Ibid.

\(^{46}\) Ibid.
evident on the infamous sweatbox humid days of a Southwest Ontario Summer, when the fumes were held down by a heavy lid of humidity. It was stomach-turning, a mixture of guts and hides and bones. They used to tell me it was a slaughterhouse, but no slaughterhouse could smell that bad. Later on my brother told me it was a rendering plant, i.e. glue factory: so maybe that's why no one told me the truth, so I wouldn't scream with horror that horses were being melted down so our postage stamps would stay on."47

One can only imagine what it felt like to live within 100 feet of such a place.48

Located on the East End, Darlings necessarily employed blacks; however, it also employed other racial minorities. The East End's history as a racialized space continued into the post-World War II period. Once Japanese families were released from the nearby labour camps, a number of them settled and made lives for themselves in the city of Chatham. Unable to rent or buy in the north end, the Japanese families were forced to live in the East End. Despite the racial forces that prompted their arrival, the result was a wonderfully unexpected mixture of cultures. Interviewee F. Bayn, who grew up on the East End, talked about his love of sushi, something he would never have come into contact with in his own home.49 Racially and culturally disparate, the Japanese kids living on the East End would discover that "[t]he black kids were [their] natural allies," because, according to Tamio Wakayama, a Chatham resident, "[their] sworn enemies were the rich white kids from the good part of town."50

As well as bringing new culinary forms, the Japanese Canadian community was linked to Chatham blacks in other ways. For example, Reverend Frederick T. Tatsu became a well-respected and beloved leader of the black First Baptist Church on Chatham's East End. Born in Kobe, Japan, Reverend Tatsu went to Divinity School in Japan, and moved to Vancouver in 1939

48 I was unable to find many descriptions of the plant, with the exception of a few newspaper articles, that offer a true appreciation for how nightmarish this place was.
49 F. Bayn interview by Carmen Poole, Chatham, ON, June 16, 2010.
50 Xiaoping Li, Voices Rising: Asian Canadians Cultural Activism (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007), 90. "The black kids were the natural allies of mine and my Nisei friends because we were both people of colour and both came from the lowest socio-economic class."
to "pastor an Independent Church."\textsuperscript{51} In 1942, Reverend Tatsu was sent to "a Road-making camp…in [the] Rocky mountains near Jasper B.C.," after which he was sent to Chatham "in April 1943 by the British Columbia Security Commission."\textsuperscript{52} He married Christine Prince, an African Canadian woman who lived in Chatham. They had four sons, one of whom, David Tatsu, also became a well-loved and well-respected reverend in Chatham.

In addition to sharing faith and family with the black community in Chatham, the Japanese members of Chatham's East End community unfortunately suffered the limitations of Chatham's racist employment practices. In \textit{Voices Rising: Asian Canadians Cultural Activism}, author Xiaoping Li interviewed Tamio Wakayama, who later became a renowned photographer and an activist in the Civil Rights movement. Mr. Wakayama's family settled in Chatham after they were released from internment. Recognizing the restrictions on the employment opportunities for Japanese people in the post-war era, Mr. Wakayama stated in his interview that "[a]bout the only employment available to Japanese Canadian men was at a fertilizer factory and tannery called Darlings," and subsequently provides the most detailed and descriptive mental image of the plant:

My father worked in the basement tannery of Darlings and all my brothers worked there in the summers. Thankfully, as the youngest child I was able to avoid this awful factory. I only went there once to take dinner to my father who was working a late shift. I remember walking down the concrete steps to enter a scene straight out of hell. The weeping concrete walls were splattered with blood, salt, and offal while the floor was awash with an equally revolting mixture. Stacks of black and brown hides, laced with salt, reached almost to the ceiling. The stench was overpowering, almost like another dimension. My father, dressed in filthy gumboots and a long black rubber apron from which hung two huge knives, walked out from one of the back rooms. He looked so very tired. I handed him his dinner and ran out. If I had stayed there for another second, I


\textsuperscript{52} Tatsu, \textit{25 years of my ministry}, np.
would have vomited. He and the other men of our community worked there for years so their families could survive.53

By 1964, Darlings had made a true nuisance of itself. The Chatham Daily News reported that a number of East End residents had yet again complained about the plant's odour, which had become quite pronounced in a recent heat wave. In response, Darlings had "launched a program to reduce the odor emanating from its east Chatham rendering plant."54 They committed close to $30,000 for "an air washing and treatment system," in an effort to ingratiate itself with the local population.55 Despite Darlings' acknowledgement of their contribution to the odour, aldermen from city council were careful to diffuse some of the responsibility by claiming that "Darling's [sic]'is not the only offender" compromising the environment in the East End. Also highlighted was the fact that the factory paid out "approximately $400,000 annually" in pay cheques and spent "another $400,000…on purchases and supplies, much of it locally," so their continued presence in the city was justified by virtue of their being a considerable, and local, economic asset.56

An article published in June 1970 identified Darlings as a "processor of animal scrap and dead animals into high protein meat meal for animal feeds, bone, meal, and tallow," and it is clear that it continued to be "credited as the source of powerful odors [that] wafted far and wide on the prevailing winds," which was a matter of course when their air purifying measures failed on a regular basis.57 Moreover, there was a certain resigned acceptance of Darlings as part of Chatham's industrial landscape.58 The news item itself was presented as a "Guess Who?" game. An aerial photograph of a large plant appeared on page two entitled "From Up Here it Smells

53 Li, Voices Rising, 89.
54 "Darling Announces Odor Control Unit," The Chatham Daily News, August 18, 1964, 1.
55 Ibid.
56 Ibid.
58 "Answer: About Darlings Photo," 36.
There is a brief caption describing the plant as an "industrial plant with a long and varied career," whose "unique contribution to the pollution of the atmosphere" might potentially "lead to its identification," was eventually identified as Darlings in the "Answer" section found on page 36. Surely environmental pollution and reduced real estate valuations must have been taken lightly by certain sectors of Chatham's "community," if Darlings' "long and varied career" could be the subject of a tongue-in-cheek newspaper game.

Fortuitously, Darlings was closed in the late 1970s, though the then-vacant plant remained on the property until it was ordered torn down in 1989 after a high school student fell 30 feet to her death. By then "[r]usty steel girders and decaying catwalks [were] all that

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60. "From Up Here it Smells Fine," 2.
remain[ed] of the structure…its belly…filled with rusted barrels, broken glass, shattered ceramic slates, and overgrown foliage.¹⁶¹ Even after it ceased belching out malodorous meat effluence, the plant remained a blight on the East End's landscape.

A related problem was the East End's battle with McGregor's Creek. As previously mentioned, Chatham had been known as "The Forks" because it was situated at the "fork" where the Thames River and McGregor's Creek met. McGregor's Creek runs along the entire northern border of the East End of Chatham, behind homes, businesses, and a church, and it ends at Indian Creek Road. Its water quality had long been an issue, as evidenced by the number of newspaper reports concerning its offensive odour. The frustration of having to deal with Chatham city council's apathy regarding the East End's environment is unmistakable in a 1941 reaction by the city's Medical Health Officer, Dr. A.E. Northwood. Dr. Northwood felt the need to respond to council's denial of having known about the problem with McGregor's Creek. Alderman Groombridge, by claiming Dr. Northwood lied about presenting his report to council, effectively denied any knowledge of the problem with the Creek. In an open letter to council published in the local paper, Dr. Northwood attempted to defend his position. Believing the mayor to be a member of the Board of Health (which he was), Dr. Northwood assumed the Mayor would have acted as a "liaison officer between the Board of Health and city council."¹⁶² Quite bitingly, Dr. Northwood stated that he "had repeatedly called the attention of the council to the condition of McGregor's Creek," and "took it for granted the mayor, as a member of the Board of Health, always reported to the council any important matters brought up at the Board of Health

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¹⁶¹ "City Orders Factory to be Torn Down Nearly One Year After Teen's Death," The Chatham Daily News, September 1, 1989, 3.
¹⁶² "MOH Says Creek Problem Mentioned in His Reports Available for the Council," The Chatham Daily News, April 13, 1941, 7.
meeting." In a tone that could easily be described as sarcastically deferential, Dr. Northwood informs council that he "would always be glad to attend any council meeting to discuss health problems and nuisances with the City Fathers, but during [his] term of office [he had] never been asked to do so." Accusing them of neglect, Dr. Northwood continued his letter: "I sent a letter to the council I had received from Dr. J.T. Phair, chief medical officer of Health for Ontario, in which he stated there was no other city in Ontario, comparable in size in Chatham, where the M.O.H. had so little help as I have." Regarding the condition of the Creek, Dr. Northwood had this to say:

What is floating on the surface is unsightly but in my opinion what is floating is not the cause of the odours. The bad odour comes, I think, from what we do not see.

Northwood also mentioned that the son of the former Medical Officer of Health, who himself would have been active at the turn of the century, informed Dr. Northwood that "during his father's time as M.O.H. the condition of the creek was a live topic of discussion" and that "[u]nless the city is prepared to spend considerable money," he thought "it will still be a controversial [sic] for many years to come."

As though his admonishments were not enough, Mr. Northwood closed his open letter by listing the references he made concerning the state of McGregor's Creek in his annual reports. In his report dated December 11th 1933, he stated that "[p]ractically all complaints made to the Board of Health were promptly remedied with the exception of those regarding McGregor's Creek. On account of the long dry spell this year I think conditions in the creek were worse than usual. We had numerous complaints but we unable to do anything to correct the evil…" In his report dated May 20th 1935, Dr. Northwood described it as "a disgrace and a menace to have
such a condition in our city." In his 1936 report, Dr. Northwood again felt obligated to alert council:

I must again call the attention of the board to the condition of McGregor's Creek. This is practically an open sewer, and the city will have to realize that something must be done to remedy this before long.  

Lastly, in his 1938 report, Mr. Northwood stated again "McGregor's Creek is still with us...[and is still] practically an open sewer. The Provincial Board of Health should again be asked to investigate to see if some means cannot be found to increase the circulation and keep the sewage moving.  

The Medical Officer of Health proved to be a strong and much-needed advocate for the health of the city, as it is unlikely that any East End community group, or group of interested or affected individuals would have had a comparable audience with the city council. However, even the MHO's influence and privilege was not enough to convince the "City Fathers" to act on behalf of those who had to not only live in a city that had a filthy and malodourous body of water, but were living within mere meters of it.

Again, to assuage any doubt about the city's elitist views, Alderman Groombridge was noted in *The Chatham Daily News* as saying that not only did "[e]veryone [know] the condition of the creek," but that "[s]ome time, sooner or later, something will have to be done about it. Prominent citizens are going to demand that we do something." Groombridge appeared, then, to have been more concerned about such "prominent citizens" and the city's public image than those who lived—in some cases, less than 10 feet—from the rotten creek. When they asked about the actual flow of the creek as the possible root of the problem, council was informed that

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65 Ibid.
66 Ibid.
it was not the east-west flow, nor was it the west-east flow of the creek that was the problem. In fact, the creek "flowed both ways—up and down." 68 The creek flowed backwards, depending on the weather and time of year, it also "sat at an absolute stand-still." 69 Mr. Hubbell argued that it was important to determine whether the Creek reeked as a result of "stagnation or pollution." 70 However, it was likely a combination of the two, since the Creek was used as a sewer and dumping ground for Darlings and an assortment of industrial and textile mills that had made the East End their home. In support of the McGregor Creek community's concerns, another Alderman was quite blunt, stating: "I don't like that word 'stink' at all, but it is the only word I know that describes McGregor's creek." 71 Alternately described as "miserable" and "unbearable" by members of the community living near the creek, the suggestion that a committee be set up to investigate the matter was initially dismissed, then qualified as follows:

We don't want a committee that will always postpone the matter, either. It might be a good idea to put all the aldermen who are seeking re-election in the autumn on the committee. Then we might get some work done. 72

This particular council meeting ended on an expected note. The Chatham Daily News reported that "[n]o action was taken on the matter at last night's meeting but it was intimated that the matter [be]…brought to the attention of…council again at its next session." 73

However, at least one special interest group, whose concerns about the Creek differed somewhat from those of East End residents, was able to exert some influence within city council. The local Rod and Gun Club likely represented the "middle-class business and professional men" who participated in recreational hunting and conservation initiatives that became quite common

68 "Investigation of Creek Problem Urged," 3.
69 Ibid.
70 Ibid.
71 "Pollution of Stream is Claimed," The Chatham Daily News, August 12, 1941, 8.
72 "Pollution of Stream is Claimed," 8.
73 Ibid.
in late-nineteenth and early twentieth North America. As hunting emerged as an elite pastime, rather than an economic necessity, a growing number of comparable groups in Ontario formed in order to preserve and protect a hobby that distinguished its members as "gentlemen" of sport and leisure, one which also provided a much-needed respite from the drudgery of the work-a-day world. In this particular case, the influence of the Rod and Gun Club is unmistakable. They presented their case to council claiming that domestic sewage was the principal culprit for the Creek's compromised state. While this claim obviously shifted the blame from industrial waste and irresponsibility and placed the onus on the citizens living in the area, the club argued the pollution from the Creek had a "serious effect on the fish in the Thames,' and that the literal "filth floating" on the water was "not only injurious to the fish…but…it was an eyesore, particularly to tourists coming up the river in motor launches." This statement clearly places the Chatham Rod and Gun club within the context of their provincial contemporaries, as it suggests their middle class interests in conservation rested less on the quality of life of East End citizens and more on "the sporting and viewing pleasure of middle-class Canadians." It appears as though the impact on game fishing and the aesthetic enjoyment of potential tourists would break the proverbial straw on council's back. Where the citizens of the East End and the Medical Health Officer failed, the Rod and Gun Club would succeed. It was their class privilege that compelled "officials of the game and fisheries" to properly inspect McGregor's Creek.

75 Abel, Changing Places, 203.
78 "Creek Inspection by Council Proposed," 1.
Zoning and City By-Laws:

Zoning laws came into use in Canada in the early 1920s and became increasingly complex and formalized in the postwar period.\(^79\) Inasmuch as zoning regulations were intended to better organize and control municipal development, there is considerable evidence that they were also used to restrict the movements of certain groups of individuals living within those

areas. As stated in a study concerning the housing restrictions imposed upon the mentally ill, Brenda A. LeFrancois et al. argue that zoning, in addition to providing necessary municipal structure, was also "used to reinforce social control." Similarly, in his study Keeping Them at Bay: Practices of Municipal Exclusion, Ian Skelton states that

while zoning is often thought of as an objective tool derived from technical principles and impartially applied, its uses can in many instances be seen to have a central role in mediating relations among social groups. More specifically, zoning has been an important component of processes of ghettoization of sections of the population identified as undesirable through certain characteristics such as race and ability.

The zoning bylaws adopted in Chatham were no different than the "restrictive" and "illegal" covenants used to control the settlement of "blacks in Nova Scotia, Asians in British Columbia, . . . as well as Jews in Ontario." Despite maintaining "an appearance of normalcy", they created racialized spaces and imposed real restrictions on individuals. The following discussion will highlight a 1971 bylaw that, despite its apparent neutrality, would subsequently be used to enforce the demolition of several notable Chatham buildings. This inaugural case illustrates the type of disenfranchisement that limited East End residents' ability to confront and defeat city officials.

In 1971, Chatham's city council was contemplating the passing of a by-law that would allow the city to order a home demolished if they found it unsafe. As John R. Miron notes in Housing in Postwar Canada: Demographic Change, Household Formation, and Housing Demand, "substantial pressures to demolish older dwellings and construct new housing of a type more profitable," to the area was not at all uncommon in the 1960s and 1970s. However, the

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80 Miron, Housing in Postwar Canada, 263; Skelton, Keeping Them at Bay, 2.
82 Ibid., 2, 5.
83 Ibid., 2, 5.
84 Miron, Housing in Postwar Canada, 263.
questionable piece of this particular bylaw was that if the city found a house to be unsafe, and the owner did not repair and/or sell the property, the city could order the home demolished and charge the property owner for the demolition. In a newspaper article dated February 2, 1971, *The Chatham Daily News* asked: "Does government have the right to order the destruction of a man's private property out of what is deemed to be for public good? And, if so, what is its moral responsibility to compensate him for his financial losses?" The case in question concerned two properties owned by Herman Scott, an elderly Chatham resident. While there is no indication as to Herman Scott's race, Scott is a relatively common black surname in the city, and his properties were located on Colborne Street, a street populated by blacks in the East End. While census data makes it reasonable to assume that the Herman Scott in the 1977 news item was indeed African Canadian, outside of the above inferences, there is no way to accurately determine his race. Nevertheless, these were East End residences. Given the manner in which the city council approached the issue it illustrates how the council disregarded the interests of residents on that side of town and refused to respect the property or its owner, because of the latter's race or class. Moreover, Alderman Harry Denkers, one of the few objectors to the by-law, "also pointed out the individual [sic] involved was an elderly man with very little education." Consequently, the city "was reasonably satisfied it had the authority to tear down the old buildings." Only two Alderman felt the city had a "moral responsibility to pay the costs of demolition." Those who initially objected to the council's position were overruled, as the city

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86 There is a Herman Scott listed as a labourer living on Hyslop Street, also on the East End, in the 1935 "Dominion Franchise List of Electors for the Electoral District of Kent, Ontario, Urban Polling Division No. 15, City of Chatham." However, his race is not listed. At the age of 54 he would have been 92 years old in 1977, an age befitting the newspaper's description of him being elderly. There was also a Herman Scott, listed as "African" in the 1911 census in the Essex North district who was 11 years old in 1911, making him 77 years old in 1977. Lastly, there was a Hermon Scott who was listed as African in the 1901 census for Essex North who was two years old at the time of census, making him 74 years old in 1977.
87 "City Council to Condemn Two Shacks," 3.
manager did not see any reason or law that would "authorize the city to pick up the tab on the property demolition." Alderman Denkers continued his protest against the immorality of the bylaw, claiming that when the city had to fix the streambed of McGregor's Creek, it was required to purchase the properties it needed to complete the task. Regardless of the naysayers, the "aldermen agree[d] to order the preparation of a bylaw demanding that the old buildings come down." The protesting Aldermen felt the bylaw profoundly unjust, and argued that the by-law would create a "precedent…[which would allow] the proposed bylaw being turned into a lever by which the municipality could order the destruction of other properties, 'as we see fit.'" His disdain for poor folk hardly concealed, Mayor Allison responded to the objections by arguing that "much of the money spent by the city on welfare ends up 'funnelling [sic] into these types of houses.'" In his view then, the city would be justified in imposing the cost of demolition on the owners of "those" types of homes. One cannot help also seeing such reasoning as a fiduciary penalty for failure to keep "these types of houses" in an "acceptable" condition. The newspaper also reported that the Mayor believes the city should have a role in seeing that "these types of houses…come up to standard." 

Despite attempts on the part of a few Aldermen to delay the application of the by-law until the elderly and undereducated man could sell his property, as he had been approached by a buyer with an offer, the bylaw was approved. Council would not be swayed by the likelihood of a potential sale. A fire had destroyed one of the homes, and the other was in a state of disrepair. Given the relative (perceived) value of the East End property and its inhabitants, and the fact that a rotting factory such as Darlings was allowed to stand inactive, deteriorating and accessible to adventure seekers, council's fear that these "two shacks" presented some public

88 Ibid.
89 Ibid.
danger and that they feared "someone might be injured," smacks of false concern.\(^91\) The result of the by-law was that the city tore down both properties at the owners' expense. The demolition cost was appended to Herman Scott's 1971 tax bill.

Zoning worked to privilege some at the expense of those lacking privilege in 1978, when the Victoria Park Neighbourhood Association demanded the Chatham Planning Board pass a zoning law that would ban the construction of multiple unit housing in their area of town. They feared that the "R3 zoning, allowing triplexes and quadraplexes, would encourage the demolition of rundown properties by owners instead of restoration and that the percentage of absentee landlords would increase."\(^92\)

"Residential High Density Zoning Districts" were a common fear among certain classes of homeowners, as highlighted in Carolyn Whitzman's study on the zoning of Toronto's Parkdale neighbourhood and in Richard Dennis' thorough study of the fear-fueled restrictions that dominated early twentieth century apartment housing in Winnipeg and Toronto.\(^93\) Similarly concerned with the possibility of plummeting land values, this Chatham neighbourhood located in the Doverdoon, Glengarry and Balmoral Road area, which were all on the North end of the city, and almost exclusively white, wanted "stricter zoning to prevent apartment construction."\(^94\) The signers of the petition for the by-law made up 97 percent of the area's residents and, in keeping with the neighbourhood aesthetic and middle-class design, wanted "seven to eight single family dwellings," built on the 360-foot by 100-foot land holding rather than see it turned into row housing or apartments.\(^95\) That a number of the "concerned" citizens owned $80,000 homes in 1978, suggests these were not moderately privileged

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95 Ibid.
According to the Royal LePage Historical Database, the average price for a "Detached Bungalow" in Chatham, Ontario in 1978 was $54,000 and the average price for an "Executive Detached Two-Storey" home was $78,000. A detached bungalow, according to Royal LePage, would be approximately 1,200 square feet and have at least three bedrooms and one and one half bathrooms, a full basement, one-car garage, no recreation room, fireplaces or appliances. An executive detached two-storey home would have approximately 2,000 square feet and four bedrooms with two and one half bathrooms, "a main floor family room, one fireplace, and an attached two-car garage…no recreation room or appliances."

Such homes and their square footage were simply not comparable to the homes in the East End. Though some of the historical homes that survived on King Street East and Wellington Street may have competed at one time with these north end homes where number of rooms and square footage are concerned, many of those homes had been divided into apartments and few existed (or continued to exist) as single-family dwellings. Whereas the average home on the north end of Chatham starts in the $200,000 range, the average price of an East End home starts between $50,000 and $60,000 and rarely increases beyond $90,000 in the current real estate market. The majority of homes on the East End were single storey, and it is doubtful that they boasted more than a single bathroom. In more recent years, the East End can include the designation of "food desert," as it meets the criteria of a "residential area that lacks walkable access to nutritious, affordable food." In its heyday, the area boasted local markets and

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99 Ibid.
groceries. In recent years, though, the last of the grocery stores have vacated the area, leaving only three variety stores and a laundromat.

As the Doverdoon neighbourhood succeeded in avoiding the blight that is multiunit housing to this day, it is unsurprising that in another part of town the Riverside Park Neighborhood Association fought and won a comparable "quality of life" zoning by-law in 1979. This one focused on the nuisance and noise of truck traffic. King Street bisects Chatham south along the Thames River, beginning at Merritt Avenue in the west, and came to a dead end in the East End at a set of now defunct railroad tracks. The distance from the western-most end to the eastern-most end of King Street is three kilometers. As mentioned previously, King Street was a street of affluence, the location of municipal offices, of business, of industry, of commercial enterprises, hotels, and restaurants; it also provided access to the "down town" and to the East End. The Riverside Park Neighbourhood Association was made up of those King Street residents who lived west of Lacroix St. to Merritt Avenue, a distance of about 900 metres. This too was an affluent area, and many of the massive residences were home to mayors, doctors, lawyers, and businessmen in the city. The by-law proposed by the Association would ban ingress and egress of trucks over five tons from Merritt Avenue to Lacroix Street along King Street West. The article quotes an earlier similar ban on five-ton trucks from Lacroix St to Third Street, also an affluent street, a stretch of road equally miniscule at less than 550 metres in length. The main argument against these trucks was that there was "no apparent reason for heavy trucks to use the portion of King Street…because it is mainly a residential area." Successful in their "long drawn-out battle" against City Hall, the "No Through Trucks" ban resulted in all such heavy traffic going through the East End. The downtown, commercial, hospitality, business, and banking districts were all located on King Street from Third Street to William Street, which cut

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102 "Section of King St Off Limits to Heavy Trucks," *The Chatham Daily News*, July 11, 1979, 3.
off 750 additional metres from the allowable portion of road that heavy truck traffic could use. Out of the full three kilometres of road, the remaining road passable by heavy trucks was the 950 metres from William Street to the dead end at King Street East, or more specifically, the main artery of Chatham's East End.

By the 1970s, Chatham's East End negative reputation had become an unquestioned fact in the minds of the city's inhabitants. The years of neglect and underdevelopment had scarred its landscape, but had yet to temper the resilience of its residents. "East End Redevelopment," an article published in Chatham's Daily News in 1979, summed up at least some groups' perception of the East End. Years of decline had finally come to the attention of the rest of Chatham. The article describes the process by which the city intended to hold public meetings to discuss "alternatives for redevelopment of east Chatham over the next 20 years." Part of this process would necessarily include input from the citizens of the East End concerning how "they wanted their portion of the city to be developed;" the city wanted to make it clear that they were "not contemplating a 'bulldozer approach' to revitalization." The fact that this caveat was made indicates, at least in part, that people feared or suspected that a "bulldozer approach" might have actually been an option. They would not have been wrong to worry about a large scale razing of communities and neighbourhoods. This particular genre of urban "renewal," also referred to as slum clearance, had been popular in mid-twentieth-century Canada and was made notorious by the mid-1960s forced relocation of the Africville community in Halifax, Nova Scotia, the postwar slum clearance in St. John's Newfoundland, and the destruction of Hogan's Alley, a black Vancouver neighbourhood that was replaced by the Georgia Viaduct, also in the 1960s.

104 "East End Redevelopment," 11.
Perhaps certain people thought that conditions in the East End were bad enough to warrant such an approach. Nevertheless, the city wanted to make plain their desire to "preserve the good aspects of the 'historically rich and unique district,' while 'minimizing the bad aspects.'"

For their part, the East End residents described the location of the city bus depot, across the street from the main East End recreational park area and public pool, as "a 20-year mistake," and commented on the impact of the "mix of industrial and commercial concerns with [the] residential area" in that particular part of town. The closing of the Adelaide Street Bridge was identified as a sore spot for the residents who argued that it should have been rebuilt, and would have been "[i]f city council had considered the needs of senior citizens and children in the area."

The bridge's closing was also blamed for the "decline in property values," since it cut off a central access point to the north end of McGregor's Creek. Declining property values, according to one property owner in the area, also occurred because of the difficulty residents faced in securing "mortgages for development" as a result of conflicting land uses in the East End.\(^\text{106}\)

Some members who attended the meeting focused on zoning. Others blamed the city for not taking preventative measures in slowing any continued decline in the area. For example, the city could have anticipated that putting a busy bus depot across from a small park where all of East End children played (one of the few small green spaces left on that side of town) was a bad idea. Still others felt that the deterioration was largely the fault of "absentee landlords, who rented the

\(^{106}\) "East End Redevelopment," 11.
houses to 'undesirables.'\textsuperscript{107} No doubt all of these factors played a part in the ultimate deterioration of the East End over time.

**Demolitions: East End Historical Properties Into the Twentieth Century:**

The deterioration of the East End is similarly evinced by the dramatic, if anticlimactic, destruction of two of its most important historical buildings. Not only were these buildings significant to the history of Chatham generally, but they were also historically significant to the roots of Chatham's black community (and, some would argue, international significance). Though a handful of interested community members tried to fight the disinterest of the city, the buildings could not be saved. It would be difficult to determine whether these buildings were destroyed because of a power imbalance in the city or apathy on the part of the affected community, but it is highly likely that it may have been combination of both.

Canada's historic places capture the spirit of the nation. They provide the connecting fabric that links us together as Canadians. Our relationship to historic places helps to define who we are. They are as important to our identity, feelings of attachment and sense of country as the maple leaf, the vast stretches of prairies or the Rocky Mountains. They offer a physical link to the past that enhances our understanding of where we have been.\textsuperscript{108}

Historians have troubled the notion that a single "connecting fabric" of Canadian history exists. Yet despite more recent postmodern sensibilities that have alerted us to selective traditions in Canadian historical research, there is little doubt that inasmuch as history needs to move towards inclusivity, its ultimate purpose lies in being shared. Christine Cameron's statement concerning "the spirit of the nation," expresses the promising impact of public history,

\textsuperscript{107} Ibid.
one that many historians and antiquarians likely share; we want to know who we are and how we came to be, and, should we discover answers to such broad questions, our ultimate goal is to share that knowledge with others. Furthermore, if indeed "Canada's historic places connect us to our past," what can be said about historic places that are unceremoniously destroyed, forgotten, or neglected beyond restoration? While historical places are not the lynchpins of historical information or appreciation, some would argue that not only do "[p]reserved buildings have the potential to create new metaphors as symbols of history and design…they [also] have the potential to share a historical experience of space."\(^{109}\) While the preservation of historic buildings could justifiably centre entirely upon their architectural value, these structures and spaces more importantly represent "historic times and events," and their physical preservation becomes significant in the conservation of "the historic metaphor for which the building is a symbol."\(^{110}\)

Despite Chatham's reputation as a town intensely interested in sharing and preserving its history, two historically significant buildings in the city—both located on the East End and both significant to black history—have been demolished. They are not the only buildings of historical significance to meet this fate in the city and across Ontario. According to Robert Shipley and Karen Reyburn's study *The Loss of Heritage Properties in Ontario*, a large number of historically designated and historically recognized properties have been demolished across Ontario since 1985.\(^{111}\) Citing a number of failed processes and variables that led to the loss of these buildings, this study proves unequivocally that historical conservation remains a serious


issue in the province. By looking at the process by which Chatham's British Methodist Church Victoria Chapel (BME) and the John Brown House met their respective fates, we are able to simultaneously understand how the city valued its history while having to confront two seemingly insurmountable obstacles: lack of funds and general disregard for black history on the part of the city.

Examining these buildings is not merely a lament to history lost; their destruction also has affected tourism and interest in the area. Had they been preserved, the John Brown House and the British Methodist Church Victoria Chapel (BME) would not only have increased city revenues: they also would have encouraged an ongoing appreciation for Chatham's history, as they had the potential to raise its local, regional, national, and international profile. In contrast, the celebrated all-black settlements of Buxton and Dresden still have a number of their original buildings, a privilege that has heavily influenced the potential for provincial funding and tourism. Dresden, in particular, is an attraction to any fan, local and international, of Harriet Beecher's Stowe's internationally recognized *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. However, black history in Chatham has all but been erased from the physical landscape, and few buildings of any African Canadian historical significance have survived. This absence has made contemporary efforts to have the city recognized as a significant location of black history in Canada very difficult, as lack of historical buildings is often the first cited reason for non-investment by municipal, provincial, or federal institutions.

As such, the erasure of these historically significant buildings in Chatham can also be constructed as "performances of domination" that "emphasize the everyday and entirely normalized qualities of racism in our culture and geographies."112 Blacks in Chatham had little

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civic influence due to systemic economic and political disenfranchisement. Many also lacked historical appreciation because they received no education in black history. Thus, despite the resistance of a proportionately small group of individuals, two buildings were destroyed that are now retroactively considered significant to not only Chatham's local history, but also to North American Civil War, abolitionist, and women's history.

**BME Church:**

The British M.E. Church is a brick building just finished, and capable of seating 1,500 persons. The edifice was planned by Wm. H. Jones, the minister now in charge; every brick in the vast building laid by one man, and every hod of mortar carried up by a single individual. From the laying of the first stone to the putting on of the last brush of paint, the workers were men of color, and nearly all of them fugitives from slavery. Not as large as the Bethel in Philadelphia, or as finely finished as St. Phillips in New York, *the Chatham church is more beautiful than either.* This edifice cost $5,000, all of which was collected by Mr. Jones, its architect, its builder, and its pastor. The church has 200 communicants, and a Sabbath school numbering about the same.¹¹³

Methodism laid its foundation at an early period among blacks in Ontario. The Church had sent African Methodist Episcopalian (AME) missionaries in 1832 to the colony, when missionary Jeremiah Miller founded four congregations upon his visit to Upper Canada. By 1840 there were twelve in total, and by 1852 there were eighteen "AME churches extending from Toronto to Windsor."¹¹⁴ The growth of the AME Church in Canada was considerable enough to justify the creation of a Canadian conference of churches in 1856. During this time members of the church leadership decided to sever ties with the AME church because of its continued connection and allegiance to the United States, an association that brought about considerable bitterness; this Canadian group renamed their church the British Methodist Episcopal Church (BME). In 1856 the BME Church was built in Chatham on the corner of Princess Street and

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Wellington Street in the east end of the city. Renaming the church the British Methodist Episcopal was their way to not only engender mental and spiritual distance from the United States and its continued commitment to the institution of slavery, but also to reflect pride in, appreciation of, and loyalty to the British Empire.

The half-acre of land the church was built upon was "first acquired by the Trustees of the African Methodist Episcopal Church from Robert K. Payne in November of 1841."

Victoria Chapel was designated the "mother church of the B.M.E. conference," and was described by the County of Kent Gazetteer and General Business Directory for 1864-1865 as follows:

![Figure 21: B.M.E. Harvest Home service, 1910. Chatham-Kent Black Historical Society.](image)

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115 Timmins Martelle, Heritage Consultants Inc., *Stage 1 Archaeological Assessment and Geophysical Investigation British Methodist Episcopal Church Property* (Chatham, Municipality of Chatham-Kent, 2008), 17.
British Methodist Episcopal Church—
Victoria Chapel—(colored) situated on
Princess Street; built in 1857; size 50x75;
cost $4000, seats 900. Rev. Walter
Hawkins, minister; residence, Princess Street.\textsuperscript{116}

As one of the first churches in the area, its size and architecture were impressive for the time. Its
grand image still exists in the memories (and in the scant few pictures) of the few elderly black
Chathamites who are able to recall the building. A. Rosey, a long-time Chatham resident who
served as a church clerk provided the following vivid recollection of the BME Church:

…the basement [was] very nice, and they could do many things there, and it
doesn't leak, the prayer room in the basement has a rug on it, it was a wine rug,
and it was a very very very very nice church. In fact, some of the early articles
relate that it was compared to some of the early black churches in the States. And
with stained glass windows in that period, it was [a] beautiful building, the woodwork
was beautiful. Artis Lane [world famous sculptor]\textsuperscript{117} lived right across from the church,
and after they moved to Chatham, she was really a good artist and she painted the
"Woman at the Well" on one wall and the "Dove of Peace" with the olive branch in its
mouth on the other. Those people painted over that…it was quite the church.\textsuperscript{118}

\textsuperscript{116} R. R. Sutherland, \textit{County of Kent Gazetteer and General Business Directory for 1864-1865} (Ingersoll: A.R.&
John Sutherland, 1864), 111.
\textsuperscript{117} Artis Lane, \textit{The Work of Artis Lane}, http://www.artislane.com/.
\textsuperscript{118} A. Rosey interview by Carmen Poole, June 15, 2010.
As A. Rosey suggests, the church was known for its size and its breathtaking stained glass windows, one of which was saved before the church was unceremoniously demolished. For the sake of comparison, the only churches in the area of comparable size were the white Episcopal Church on Wellington Street, which cost $7,600 to build and had 500 seats; St. Joseph
Catholic Church also on Wellington Street, which was 60 by 100 feet, included separate wings, cost $10,000 to build, and held 600 worshipers; and the Wesleyan Methodist Church on King Street, a frame building constructed in 1848, which was 40 by 60 feet in size, sat 350 people and cost $3000.\textsuperscript{119}

Other black churches in the area barely compared to the size and seating capacity of the BME Church. In keeping with what William Westfall found in his study of nineteenth century churches in Ontario, the number of churches in the mid-Victorian Chatham increased steadily often "[outpacing]…the rapid rate of denominational expansion."\textsuperscript{120} Despite the small size of its black population, the Baptist and Methodist churches in Chatham multiplied which, as Westfall describes in the context of similar trends across the province," actually reduced the average size of their congregations."\textsuperscript{121} The Tabernacle Baptist Church, located at King Street and Wellington, was built in 1853, was 40 by 60 feet, cost $4000 to build and sat 500 congregants.\textsuperscript{122} The First Baptist Church on King Street West, was built in 1861, cost $600 to build, was 30 by 50 feet and sat only 200 patrons.\textsuperscript{123} The African Union Methodist Church, also on King Street, was built "of frame in 1857", was 60 feet by 30 feet and also sat 200 worshipers.\textsuperscript{124} Assuming every black person in the city of Chatham attended church, by these pew numbers listed in the \textit{Kent Gazetteer and General Business Directory for 1864-1865}, there were approximately 1800 church seats for a black population of less than 1300. Needless to say, the BME Church was considered

\textsuperscript{119}\textit{Sutherland, County of Kent Gazetteer}, 111.
\textsuperscript{120}William Westfall, \textit{Two Worlds: The Protestant Culture of Nineteenth-Century Ontario} (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988), 129. "Between 1851 and 1881 all the major Protestant denominations either matched or exceeded the rate of increase in the population as a whole, and quite remarkably, church building outpaced even the rapid rate of denominational expansion. In this period the Anglicans almost doubled their number of adherents, while they trebled the number of their churches. The Presbyterians (taken as a whole) and the Baptists grew a little more rapidly than the Anglicans, and they too trebled the number of their churches. The Methodists were even more prolific builders. While the number of their adherents trebled (again taking all the Methodists together), the number of their churches increased by a factor of five."
\textsuperscript{121}Westfall, \textit{Two Worlds}, 129.
\textsuperscript{122}Sutherland, \textit{County of Kent Gazetteer}, 111.
\textsuperscript{123}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{124}Ibid.
a church among churches for a town of relatively small size. It was not just impressive by "black standards"; it also competed in size and style with some of the better known black churches south of the border.

The Church's first bishop, Reverend Willis Nazrey, was the "ninth pastor of Mother Bethel African Methodist Episcopal church in Philadelphia, Penn. founded by Richard Allen." Bishop Nazrey also founded the Nazrey Institute in Chatham, a secondary school that was created by a provincial Act to Incorporate in 1869. The Act of Incorporation further describes the motivations of the signers:

Whereas the ministers and members of the British Methodist Episcopal Church in Canada and others, have long labored in those portions of Her Majesty’s North American possessions known as the Dominion of Canada, for the education and spiritual welfare of their people therein; and it is deemed expedient to institute a system of education and instruction whereby the youth of the county may be liberally taught; and whereas application hath been made to incorporate the Nazrey Institute, in order to promote the above-named objects, and it is desired that the said school should be conducted on the industrial plan.

In 1873, the Nazrey Institute "merged with the former British American Institute at Dawn, whose assets combined to create the Wilberforce Educational Institute in Chatham," which provided "a superior education and proper preparation for matriculation examinations in the areas of art, law, and medicine at the university level."

After Bishop Nazrey died two years later in 1875, he was replaced by Reverend Richard Disney who tried and failed to unite the BME and AME churches and subsequently resigned. His successor, Reverend Walter Hawkins, staunchly in favour of the separation of the two church

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125 Gwendolyn Robinson and John Robinson, *Seek the Truth: A Story of Chatham's Black Community* (Chatham, ON, 1989), 81.
126 *Statutes of the Province of Ontario, Passed in the Session Held in the Thirty-Third Year of the Reign of Her Majesty Queen Victoria* (Toronto: Alexander Gordon, Law Printer to the Queen’s Most Excellent Majesty, 1869), 172-173. Emphasis added. Note a number of Masons were also counted among the signers: James C. Willmore, Isaac Holden, and Benjamin Stewart.
bodies, concretely determined their divergent identities by 1887. Under the leadership of Reverend James C. Richards, who was also a prominent Prince Hall Mason in the city of Chatham, the church expanded its membership and soon required a larger building. Reverend Richards superintended the building of the new brick structure in 1910. While the church grew and continued to flourish, the congregants split in 1930 to create the new Community Church; it was not until 1958 that the church congregants would reunite once again under the BME banner. As families relocated, as individuals moved and died, the church struggled to stay open and despite its congregation's efforts, the church closed around 1980.

Though there had been efforts to keep the church in good repair, including fundraisers in the 1960s, time and disuse would see the building's structure worsen. As the deterioration continued unchecked, the Victoria Chapel, still housing its original piano and organ, began to shift on its foundation and rot from above. This deterioration serendipitously coincided with growing interest in heritage preservation initiatives. Conservation projects were sweeping the province, characterized as an "explosion of interest in historic places," in the 1960s. The Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada was initiated in 1919; however, it was during the late 1960s and 1970s that the federal government began to formalize the processes by which historic preservation would be conducted in Ontario. It also began to acquire historic buildings in the hopes of turning them into financial investments and cultural currency. "[T]he federal government launched the Canadian Inventory of Historic Building (CIHB)," in 1970, and in 1973, founded the Heritage Canada Foundation which increased the interest and ability of

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128 Robinson and Robinson, Seek the Truth, 81.
129 Ibid., 82.
132 Cameron, "The Spirit of Place," 78.
133 Ibid.
"provincial and territorial governments, and some municipal governments [to introduce] legislation to protect heritage properties." Unfortunately for the BME Church, early interest in historical landscapes and preservation tended to focus on sites of military significance and sites related to the period of European exploration of Canada" (of which it was neither), and favoured so-called "nationally" relevant sites over those marked by local or regional interests. The Ontario Heritage Act (1975) laid the groundwork for the creation of Local Architectural Conservation Advisory Committees (LACACs), which "[were] involved in implementing the province's heritage policies." Unfortunately, the LACACs operated as advisory bodies only and did not have the institutional power to determine whether or not a site should or will be preserved.

In 1982, members of the dwindling and aging Church membership and Chatham's Local Architectural Conservation Advisory Committee (LACAC) split the fee for a feasibility study concerning the likely restoration of Victoria Chapel. Given the expense of $5000, the church and the LACAC had applied to the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Culture for a grant to help defray the expense of the report. The city architect, A. Douglas Hanley, was paid $5,000 for his assessment and reported a cost of $477,164 to return the chapel to its former glory. To offer a glimpse of the extent the neglect, the report allocated the $477,164 as follows:

The costs break down to $203,750 for architectural work such as interior painting, new windows and frames, insulation and flooring; $108,500 for structural work such as repairing and rebuilding exterior brick walls; $52,100 for mechanical alterations such as the heating system; and $30,000 for a new electrical system.

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134 Ibid., 79.
135 Ibid., 82.
By reading the articles concerning the deterioration of the church and the desire to have it restored, one gets a keen sense of the frustration involved in dealing with the bureaucracy of municipal and provincial bodies. In the same article reporting the potential cost of fixing the church, the LACAC's secretary and assistant city clerk Allan Matheson let it be known that the LACAC had been trying to get a heritage designation for the church from the ministry since 1979.139 The path leading up to the dénouement of the fate of Victoria Chapel is as contradictory as it is bizarre. On May 10, 1983, The Chatham Daily News reported on its front page that the BME Church Victoria Chapel was to be designated "as a property of historical and architectural significance in the city of Chatham."140 The first designation of its kind in Chatham was the result of a city council bylaw, which itself was the result of the efforts of a handful of "church elders request[ing] Chatham to designate the church as an historical site,"141 starting in 1978 when representatives of the church approached city council. The aforementioned LACAC determined the building worthy of preservation and their report further compelled the city to designate the site. Passing the bylaw would mean "any future alteration or demolition of the building [would] require approval by council."142 However, despite passing the bylaw, the city council stressed that it would not invest in the restoration and/or preservation of the church in any way and that an external application for funds would need to be made to the Ontario Heritage Foundation.143

By 1985, when "pieces [of the church were] beginning to fall off the structure every week," the council decided that if their city engineer determined the structure unsafe, it would be...

139Ibid.
141Naczynski, "Chatham Enacts Bylaw", 1.
142Ibid.
143Ibid.
left to the "church congregation to repair it or tear it down." This determination was made possible because the creation of the previously mentioned 1971 bylaw allowed the city to unilaterally determine whether a property was worthy of demolition and, if so, charge the cost of the demolition to the property owners. This was obviously bad news to the existing members of the congregation, and, also, to members of various historical societies and public historians in Chatham. Dolores Shadd, "one of the three remaining BME Church committee members, said their group doesn't want the building torn down; they would like to see it saved but don't know how to go about it." Shadd also stated that "[t]he BME church district congregation is small and there just isn't any money to make the repairs on our own." There was no intention on the part of the existing members to renew the building's use as a church; however, suggestions had been made to turn it into a "mini-museum" or a much needed "youth centre or day-care facility" for the underserved population on the East End of Chatham. The newspaper itself boasted the significance of the church as "the first religious institution formed by the city's black community," and as "the city's [sic] first heritage site." Nevertheless, the heritage designation bylaw also allowed owners to have the designation removed, thus making it easier for the city to get around its inability to demolish any building "with a heritage designation attached to it."

The church sat untouched for another four years, when council decided it could defer responsibility for potential preservation of the site onto the members (as few as they were) of the church. In April 1989 the local paper reported "Council Defers Church Demolition." Chatham's council decided to wait to make their demolition order until "a member of the congregation [could] appear before council to provide some historical background of the church for the city's

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146 Ibid.
147 Ibid.
However, this statement implied the historical significance of Victoria Chapel had not yet been determined. Given its local significance and the city's own designation of the church "as a property of historical and architectural significance in the city of Chatham," a mere six years prior to 1983, the change in the city's position was suspect and unfortunate. Still desperate to save the church, and despite her believable claim that "[i]t's been a headache where to go to get grants," Dolores Shadd contacted the Mayor, Bill Erickson, to ask that council wait until she could collect enough data to present to council. However, the decision had already been made and "the trustees 'with regret' [had] determined that it is advisable to obtain a permit for the demolition of the church subject to the concurrence of the Local Architectural [sic] Conservation Advisory Committee." Though it had been an early supporter, the LACAC passed the resolution and found the building to be "a health and safety hazard," and that "because all avenues for the funding of the restoration have been exhausted during the past decade, that it does not oppose the demolition of the building." Seven months later, on November 30 1989, The Chatham Daily News used only a picture and a short, completely unceremonious caption to report:

Brick by brick the old BME church located on the city's east end is slowly being dismantled. Larry Santsche of Stolk Inc. have taken on the chore. They plan to sell the bricks for 25 cents each.

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149 Naczynski, "Chatham Enacts Bylaw", 1.
Figure 23: BME church demolished. The Chatham Daily News, 1989.

Reports of the designation and subsequent demolition reveal that the likelihood of the church being preserved was negligible and that the will of the city was not something to depend on. Those who remember continue to scratch their heads and ask themselves how a designated building could have been demolished. Gwendolyn Robinson, local historian and founder and Executive Director Emeritus of the Chatham-Kent Black Historical Society (CKBHS), offers her personal impression of what happened with the BME Church:

GR: No, no no no no they tore it [the BME Church] down. And I can remember because it wasn’t theirs. Some of the BME people and the woman that made the statement is dead now, [said] "Well tear it down, what does it mean?" They lived in Buxton, didn’t mean anything to you but it did here. I can remember [redacted]
and I respected him…and he said "Can you come down here for a minute?" The conference trustees were meeting at Mrs. [redacted], she was wife of one of the early preachers, and Dolores and [redacted] was there, [redacted] was there, etc…I can’t name them all! And he said "Can you come down and just tell them what that church could be used for and how the conference could help it?" And I thought about it and…well go ahead, and they sat here and waited till I went down there with my little outfit on and said it could be used for a lot of things, but the main thing it could be used for is a place where seniors could meet have quilting bees there have many serve meals out of there, they had some tremendous cooks, they weren’t so old then that they weren’t cooking…

…it was quite the church, but they still, the conference let them tear it down, and poor little Gwen was trying to save it. And it was designated as one of Chatham's historic buildings…

CP: Who had it designated?

GR: The BME people, probably, I was a part of it. I don't remember whose name, I don't remember but I know it had been designated as a historic property.

CP: And even the designation didn't…?

GR: Didn't mean anything because it was black…well, I'm saying that, but I believe it.

It was extremely difficult, though, for a handful of humble individuals who lacked the social and political power to raise close to $500,000 for repairs; the disappointment they must have experienced after realizing the designation would not save the church must have been crushing. After all, the structure could have been saved. Furthermore, Dolores Shadd suggested, the City's East End had needs that were (and still are not) being met; the building could have been of considerable social value to the residents in the area. While the lack of funds is not surprising, given where the church was located and whom it represented, yet it was not just the will of the council or rest of the city that led to its demolition.

Moreover, in none of these articles was there a large public outcry by the black population in Chatham. There was no great rally to its defence as most black people in Chatham felt no kindred ties to the church or the building and likely had even less sense of its historical
significance outside of what they may have read in the local paper. Among other mitigating factors, one reason for this lack of interest could be the fact that local black history was not widely celebrated at this time, and it had not been taught in the schools at the local level for several generations. As will be discussed in the succeeding section, a general ignorance on the part of blacks in Chatham regarding their history in the region contributed, in part, to a general lack of interest in the preservation of black history in the city.
John Brown's House:

Figure 24: From the Chatham Kent Museum Collection: "the John Brown House, even though Brown did not live in this house, home of the anti-slavery paper "The Provincial Freeman" printed by I.D. Shadd from 1854-1863; John Brown was killed at Harper's Ferry in 1859."

That the history of John Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry continues to be recognized in Chatham is due in very large part to the efforts of a single woman, Gwendolyn Robinson. Robinson was the force behind the twinning of the two cities, Chatham and Harper's Ferry West Virginia, in recognition of their shared past through the life, work, and death of John Brown. The Chatham-Kent Black Historical Society, founded in 1992 and incorporated in 1994, has been holding a yearly John Brown conference in the city for the last 10 years. This is not a part of
Chatham's history Robinson ever wanted ignored or forgotten. Councilors, journalists, and historical societies have also recognized the importance of Chatham's historical role in the planning of the raid on Harper's Ferry and the writing of Brown's provisional constitution for a new American Republic. Given the disputes over Brown's raid as a bold act of courage or one that was treasonous, one that stemmed from either naiveté or insanity, John Brown's visit to Chatham could also be constructed as a very important moment in Chatham's black history. That John Brown selected Chatham as the place to plan this act of aggression against his slavery-supporting government must have been measured and purposeful. It is commonly understood that he went to Chatham deliberately to raise money and recruit bodies for his attack on the United States government. As Fred Landon writes in *The Journal of Negro History* (1921):

> Chatham had been chosen as the place of meeting with special reference to the effect it might have on the large Negro population resident in the immediate vicinity. There were more Negroes within 50 miles of Chatham than in any other section of Canadian territory, and among them were men of intelligence, education, and daring, some of them experienced in slave raiding. Brown was justified in expecting help from them.\(^{154}\)

Referencing Richard J. Hinton's work *John Brown and His Men* (1904), Landon states that "John Edwin Cook, one of Brown's close associates, declared in his confession made after Harper's Ferry, that 'men and money had both been promised from Chatham and other parts of Canada.'"\(^{155}\) Brown thus understood Chatham to be the place where sympathetic financial aid, willing and able bodies, and trustworthy connections could be found. There was also a close network of relatively affluent and learned individuals such as Mary Ann Shadd, Israel Shadd, and James Bell who lived in the city and who could be counted on for support. Not necessarily known for their radicalism, nevertheless, the Chatham blacks who met with Brown were willing

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to help, though some feared their connection to such an act of treason would be great enough to justify arrest and/or extradition.

The John Brown House on the southeastern corner of King and Adelaide streets was "a 4-
tenement brick building with the lower story used for business purposes." Built by black businessman James Charity, it also housed the offices of Mary Ann Shadd's newspaper, the Provincial Freeman.\textsuperscript{156} Recognized as the final home of the Freeman which was published by the first female newspaper editor in North America, the building would certainly have been a major tourist attraction that would have represented a significant intersection of Canadian history, American history, African American and Canadian history and women's history. That African Canadian historiography and Ontario Heritage Foundation official commemorative plaques have tended to focus exclusively on black contributions prior to the Civil War also suggests that the John Brown House, home to the Provincial Freeman, would have been a popular heritage destination.\textsuperscript{157}

In 1891 the "two most westerly tenements were taken off" the building when the CPR came through the city, but what remained would still have held some historical interest.\textsuperscript{158} However, despite the newspaper's suggestion that this house held the promise of tourism revenue, and that it was an artifact of national significance that signified Canada's role in an event that some scholars argue was the catalyst of the Civil War, the house itself would not be saved. Despite all the ink and newsprint expended on the issue, ultimately the reluctance and/or apathy

\textsuperscript{156} "John Brown's House, One of Chatham's Historic Sites," The Chatham Daily News, March 25, 1941, 3.
\textsuperscript{157} Owen Thomas, "Cultural Tourism, Commemorative Plaques, and African-Canadian Historiography: Challenging Historical Marginality," Histoire Sociale/Social History 29, no. 58 (1996): 432-436. "Of the 1,077 plaques unveiled to date by the OHF, only 10 pertain directly to the field of Black history, erected between 1957 and 1995. Of this number, three plaques deal with the early refugee era (including both the American War of Independence and the War of 1812) and five with the Civil War era (1850 to 1865). When grouped thematically, four of the plaques commemorate places or events important to African-Canadian history and four deal with 'exceptional' Blacks."
\textsuperscript{158} "John Brown's House, One of Chatham's Historic Sites," 3.
on the part of the local community would see the home demolished as unceremoniously as the BME church.

An article published in the Chatham Daily News on June 6, 1939, reflects the popularization of a particular narrative that would benefit local historiography. In this particular edition of the paper, the John Brown House was lauded as the site known as the 'terminal of the 'Underground railway' which operated for the 'transportation' of slaves who escaped from their masters and found their way to Canada. A large number of them settled in southwestern Ontario, and Chatham and Kent County received its quota.  

This was no ordinary edition of the local paper. This special edition was written to celebrate King George VI and Queen Elizabeth who were making their way to Canada on the Empress of Australia. After having been "shown many motion pictures and lantern slides depicting views of the wonderful country they were about to visit," the royal couple was also given a photograph of the John Brown House in Chatham. The newspaper highlights the fact that the plans for the "armed uprising in the States" were made in the house whose picture was presented alongside the article. In keeping with the all-too-common "nationalistic back-slapping" where Canada's "long tradition of tolerance" towards blacks is contrasted against the less civilized bigotry present in the United States, there is a strong air of civic and commonwealth pride throughout the article, not surprising given its intended audience.  

Since copies of this issue of The Daily News will be perused by the Royal Pair and their Household, we present for their interest today a picture of this historic house which is situated on the corner of King and Adelaide Streets". Though they have some of their facts wrong (the article incorrectly states that John Brown died during the battle at Harper's Ferry), it does reach impressive rhetorical heights:

160 Thomas, "Cultural Tourism," 437.
His memory was cherished by the colored people whose emancipation he fought to effect, and it was as a tribute to his efforts in the cause of humanity that the familiar song was composed: 'John Brown's body lies a-moulding [sic] in the grave; But his soul goes marching on.'

In 1941, amid wartime articles concerning Hitler, savings bonds, and scrap aluminum drives, several newspaper articles were written discussing the importance of the John Brown house and its potential value to the city. The interest in the house began as a "proposal to properly mark" the John Brown house, as well as other buildings in the city, that were all related to the events at Harper's Ferry. In a push to attract "more visitors from the United States" by making their trip "more interesting, educative and profitable," the Western Ontario Tourist Association thought that by connecting some of these locations to benefit tourism, such efforts would also "benefit…merchants and others who appreciate the tourist trade." By their own admission:

Every school boy and girl in the United States has studied the career of John Brown of Harper's Ferry. Brown was a national figure in the states in the early days, and it is believed that there isn't a single American citizen passing through Chatham who would not welcome an opportunity to see the very house in which John Brown plotted the raid which causes his name to be entered in the American history books. That house is right in Chatham, on the corner of King and Adelaide streets, close to the C.P.R. tracks.

The house was owned by Canadian Pacific Railway, and was occupied by the widow of a former CPR gate attendant. The tone of the article was hopeful, given the interest in the potential of the property, and the fact that CPR officials "seem[ed] to be quite sympathetic with the idea, and anxious to do all in their power to assist the plan to mark [the] historic site, and preserve it as a tourist attraction." The CPR had given permission for the placement of a historical plaque and gave their "assurance that the house never will be destroyed without consulting the civic authorities." All this led the author of the newspaper article to surmise that "[t]here is therefore

\[162\] Ibid.
\[163\] "John Brown's House, One of Chatham's Historic Sites," 3.
\[164\] Ibid.
an excellent prospect of the John Brown House being preserved for all time as an Historic Site and a Tourist Attraction.”165

A month later the newspaper featured a *Globe and Mail* article about John Brown and his connection to Chatham. *Globe and Mail* reporter J.V. McAree admits that few people knew or remembered the John Brown connection to Canada; the article was written to rectify that oversight. He felt that Brown came to Canada for two main reasons: to plot his raid in peace and quiet and because Chatham was the home of "quite a few former slaves who had escaped to this country and were counted upon to be active helpers of John Brown."166 It is well known that there were 34 black and 12 white delegates at the Convention, and that most of the white people present had travelled with John Brown to the city. Of those who were black, not all had been fugitive slaves: James Madison Bell was born free in Ohio, while Martin Delaney, Osborne P. Anderson, Alfred Whipper, and Isaac D. Shadd were all free born and were members of what could best be called Chatham's black elite. Thus, John Brown came to Chatham to access the pull and prestige of these individuals, their money, influence and assistance: he was not simply in Chatham to collect cannon fodder. The purpose of the convention was to sign a new Constitution of the United States of America once it was forcibly freed from its commitment to the institution of slavery. These were men of whom Brown had at least some prior knowledge and with whom, he believed, he could build a new republic.

The issue of preservation arrived at council in April of 1941, when it was asked to "consider a proposition to guarantee for future generations, the preservation of the 'John Brown House," one of the most interesting and valuable historic relics in Western Ontario…"167 The

165 Ibid.
failure to preserve the site would have a two fold impact as "a distinct loss to Chatham...as a relic of the stirring days of the past, but also as an attraction for tourists, to assist in building up the tourist trade." This reaction reveals a profound awareness that the building itself was living history, a symbol of Chatham's role in the history of abolitionism, slavery, and Brown's growing impatience with a corrupt government south of the border. The perception on the part of those supporting the maintenance of the property was that" preserved buildings can become icons for the institution [or community] that chooses to preserve them," and that the building, rather than its mere memory, represented a significant "visual [representation] of the past" that ought to be preserved. The destruction of the John Brown home was clearly understood as too costly a loss.

Unfortunately, however, the CPR owned the house and the property. Since the railroad derived no income from the property, they had no incentive to keep it or prevent its destruction. Nevertheless, the house was described as an "asset" and as "invaluable to the city." The newspaper reported that the house be turned into a small museum, or a visitors' centre that could disseminate literature concerning other places worth visiting in Kent County. This way, tourists could "be induced to remain longer in Chatham...and enjoy the fine hospitality of Chatham people." The 1941 article also stated that the house would not be expensive to buy, especially "in comparison to the intrinsic value of this property as an historic site," and the hope was that the whole area could benefit from the appropriation of this "municipal asset." Yet another article appeared in April 1941, claiming there was "progress being made toward the

168 "Council to be Asked to Preserve Historic House of John Brown," 3.
170 "Council to be Asked to Preserve Historic House of John Brown," 3.
171 Ibid.
172 Ibid.
preservation" of the John Brown House "as a city landmark. Indeed, suggestions were made that the city buy the "adjoining lot" in case they should seek expansion of the museum and visitors centre in the future.

Eight years later, though, in October 1949, it appears the CPR tired of the slow moving decision making process on the part of the city, and issued a letter to council stating that they would have the house demolished unless the city purchased it. This threat to destroy the building was met by what could best be characterized as a lukewarm response by the city's Mayor, Ralph Steele, who saw fit to simply have it be known that "there are other houses in the city which are more closely connected to John Brown.

In November of that same year, Victor Lauriston launched into an oddly timed defeatist tirade concerning the dubious claims about the house's genealogy. Lauriston, it seems, was resigned to the inevitable fate of the John Brown house. In "Myth and Mystery Surround True Story of Brown House", Lauriston begins:

John Brown was not born in Chatham. He did not live here for any great length of time. He did not own the so-called 'John Brown" house, nor did he own any other property in Chatham. John Brown was white and of Puritan descent. He was a fanatic in his hatred of slavery.

Further diminishing the potential significance of the house, Lauriston continues:

He spent some weeks in Chatham, conferring with his white and colored sympathizers; and made a further brief visit to Chatham in the summer of 1859. These were his only contacts with Chatham.

The tone is difficult to ignore. Lauriston appears to assuring Chathamites that the destruction of this building was acceptable because John Brown did not live there nor did he own

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the place where he briefly resided. Lauriston is at pains to make the constitutional convention held in Chatham sound like a social visit. After years of constructing that site as sacred, he attempted to throw doubt upon John Brown's whereabouts. Suddenly no one was sure where he stayed, despite the fact that it had been locally (and historically) "known" for years. John Brown's "conferring with his white and colored sympathizers" produced a historical document that not only represented growing unrest in the United States, it also influenced an act of treason by a man who would become a martyr and the subject of a battle hymn sung in one of the bloodiest wars in American history.\footnote{178}

In January 1950, at the behest of the chairwoman of the Historical Committee of the Canadian Association of Tourist and Publicity Bureau, Ella Cork, Mayor George Kerr assured city Council that the John Brown House was "safe."\footnote{179} Word was spreading that the house was going to face demolition, and Cork wanted to make sure the city was going to "explore every means to save this historic building" by promising, as they had, "full co-operation of the committee, \textit{short of financial aid}."\footnote{180} A month later, though, the paper's headline read: "John Brown House Must be Demolished."\footnote{181} The article reported that the house had "been condemned and must be demolished," and that "[i]n these words the C.P.R. has passed final judgment on Chatham's best known landmark."\footnote{182} This article provided additional historical context for the building, its local importance for the city, and for blacks living in the city. The tone, however, seems to be one of mourning:


\footnote{"John Brown House 'Safe' Says Mayor," \textit{The Chatham Daily News}, January 31, 1950, 3.}

\footnote{"John Brown House 'Safe' Says Mayor," 3. Emphasis added.}

\footnote{"John Brown House Must be Demolished," \textit{The Chatham Daily News}, February 28, 1950, 11.}

\footnote{"John Brown House Must be Demolished," 11.}
Ninety-two years, almost to a day, John Brown and his companions…halted before the office of the Provincial Freeman which occupied the most westerly of the four tenements into which the Charity Block was then divided…In these days the building was new. It has been erected about 1850 by James H. Charity an enterprising colored shoe-maker.\textsuperscript{183}

The News is also careful not to condemn the CPR, since it had been waiting around for some time "with infinite patience, in the hope that the city or some civic organization would take steps to remodel and preserve it." Those who had the funds, though, were not interested in saving the house. Those who were interested in saving the house were not "in a financial position to undertake the outlay." However they were not lacking where dramatics were concerned, though the lamentation was likely genuine, The Chatham Daily News closes the article:

Now, presumably, it is too late. But the thought of what might have been will always haunt us. And a future generation, harking back to the John Brown legend, will wonder why we of this era did not act in the matter.\textsuperscript{184}

Three articles in rapid succession gave some, albeit false, momentary relief. On March 8\textsuperscript{th} 1950, an article stated that the Chatham Board of Trade is interested in "pressing" city council to do something to save the house and/or "reconsider their decision to allow demolition of the house."\textsuperscript{185} On March 14 1950, the headline read "John Brown House Gets Reprieve for One Year." In the April 28 1950 edition of The Chatham Daily News, the Kent Historical Society contemplated opportunities to restore the house. They wanted to see a plan for preservation, and discuss the fact that even as a vacant building "in its present dilapidated condition", it draws the attention of American tourists visiting the area."\textsuperscript{186} They recognized that the house would be a "drawing card" for greater tourism; with Lauriston's support, the Society recognized that saving the house was easily the wisest path to take.

\begin{footnotes}
\item[183] Ibid.
\item[184] Ibid.
\end{footnotes}
No matter. Nineteen days later the headline reads "John Brown's House Demolished." This news item was not a fully article, rather it simply presented a photograph of a half demolished building with a caption that reads:

John Brown's house, one of Chatham's most famous and disputed landmarks, will soon be no more. Trade Board officials have reluctantly decided to have the building demolished. The picture above shows the work well underway, with the kitchen at the rear of the house, already torn down.\footnote{"John Brown's House Demolished," \textit{The Chatham Daily News}, May 17, 1951, 21.}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{john_brown_house_demolished.png}
\caption{John Brown House demolished. The Chatham Daily News, 1951.}
\end{figure}

If article placement is any indication of the importance of news items, most of the articles concerning the John Brown House were between the newspaper's first and fifth pages, the
majority being on page three. The final picture with caption that reported the final demolition of the house was on page twenty-one.

As though to have the final say about the John Brown story in order to make the case that the city cares about its history and appreciates its monumental spaces, the paper published "John Brown Lives in Chatham's Past." Saying nothing of the John Brown House, this article discusses John Brown the man and his plans to overthrow the government of the United States, however ill advised. This article states that it was in the First Baptist Church where "Brown drew up his battle campaign" surreptitiously and that Brown was hanged "a year and a half after the conference in the church on what was later King Street East."189 If not to overemphasize the fact that it was the First Baptist Church and only the First Baptist Church that had any lasting historical significance where John Brown was concerned, the article closes by mentioning the fact that though the church has changed over time, it has held on to tables and chairs supposedly used during the conference. The article ends by asking rhetorically: "Who is to say whether or not the American Civil War had its obscure beginnings in a little church in Chatham?"190

Though applying the word "campaign" would be erroneous in that it would indicate some concerted and organized effort, the loose coalition of individuals, groups, and societies that tried to save the house came up against a lack of funds and a lack of interest. This is certainly the fate of a number of buildings in a number of towns where privilege is not shared equally among the citizens and inhabitants. In their 2002 study of demolished heritage properties in Ontario, Robert Shipley and Karen Reyburn researched "approximate 9000 properties in 22 communities" and found that 433 buildings had been destroyed since 1985.191 One of the major causes for this

destruction was "unsympathetic development" followed by "fire, neglect, and vandalism."\textsuperscript{192} To address the continued loss of heritage properties, the authors recommended increased planning and knowledge gathering on the part of government and municipal representatives, "more encouragement for designation of significant buildings," the development of a standard listing of buildings, and financial assistance.\textsuperscript{193} A cursory glance at the Heritage Canada Foundation "Worst Losses List" proves that little has changed: the John Brown House was no anomaly where valuable historical properties have been razed despite historical designation or recognition.\textsuperscript{194}

The newspaper's reporting vacillated over time and reflected the conflicting feelings towards the house, its history, its significance, and its value as a monument and memorial as well as a cash cow. Once viewed as a point of pride, the house was alternately constructed as a significant historical place of undeniable historic value, and as a site of only passing significance once it appeared that it might be on the chopping block. Furthermore, the House's fate was buried in the back pages when it was demolished.

While the house could not make a claim to uniqueness, given that John Brown met at the Princess Street School, since demolished, and the No. 3 Engine House, also demolished "where a colored firefighting unit was housed," and the First Baptist Church (a building that only survived

\textsuperscript{192} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{193} Ibid.
due to the simple fact that it has maintained a healthy church congregation over the years), the John Brown House was widely accepted to have been of some significance. In April 1941 a *Chatham Daily News* article entitled "Americans Interested in John Brown House" reported that "New York and Kansas historical societies write to Chatham for information regarding John Brown's activities here." The city's mayor had received letters from the Lake Placid Club in the Adirondacks, Essex County, New York State, and the treasurer of the Kansas State Historical Society. The letters, presented in the article in their entirety, referenced John Brown's significance to their respective state and regional histories, and offered assistance in the preservation of the John Brown House:

From New York State:

…These gentlemen in New England, among them Ralph Waldo Emerson, Thoreau, and Thomas Wentworth Higginson, did not endorse his [John Brown's] Harper's Ferry raid plan but they were in general sympathy with his abolitionist views. The library of the Lake Placid Club is at present the depository of a considerable collection of Adirondackana, including material on John Brown. It would add substantially to the value of this collection if you could put me in touch with material that would describe the John Brown house and particularly a photograph of it and in touch with someone who may be especially interested in the preservation of this house, since through him or her it might be possible for me to secure records that would constitute an important addition to the historical collection we have here. John Brown resided in the town of North Elba, within three miles of the village of Lake Placid, and his grave is an historic spot which attracts many thousands of visitors each year.

From Kansas:

We are very grateful for the copy of the Daily News for March 25, 1941, containing the article about the John Brown house. It occurs to us that this article might serve well a movement that is under way in Topeka to acquire an old building used by Brown as a hiding place for slaves. The place is now privately owned and is up for sale and interested citizens are urging purchase by the city. We believe the local papers could use your article to good advantage and we should like very much to secure two more copies.

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That someone thought the house important enough to include a picture of it in the media kit for the Royals and that interested parties in the United States sent letters of concern and support indicates that the house was far more than bricks and mortar. Even if one could not see its value in the facts, myths or lore surrounding John Brown, it is extraordinary that few people argued for its preservation or mourned its loss as the Chatham home of Mary Ann Shadd's Provincial Freeman newspaper. Her home in Washington DC, otherwise known as the Mary Ann Shadd Cary House, is designated a National Historic Landmark even though, by the National Park Services' own admission, the house is "not directly associated with Cary's involvement in the Underground Railroad,…[however] her home helps us to better understand her participation in the movement and her lifelong advocacy for the equality of all people."\(^{198}\)

The house is deemed historical because of who lived there, whether they did their greatest work while living there or not.

Moreover, the newspaper, as thorough in its investigation and supportive of the House as it may have been, did not report the sentiments of the individuals impacted by the house, its history, or its location in their neighborhood. According to A. Rosey, who lived near the building and walked by it frequently, disrepair could not have been the reason to tear it down and any suggestion that it was deteriorating was a fabrication: "when it come to the James Charity block, where the Provincial Freeman was…and it wasn't in disrepair. Some don't believe it was as bad as it seemed."\(^{199}\) In this sense, at least, the real reasons the John Brown House and home of the Provincial Freeman was torn down are inconsequential if local black residents perceived that it was torn down with prejudice.


\(^{199}\)Rosey, interview.
The fate of John Brown House may also have been the result of an ill-informed local population, black or white. When asked about their knowledge of local black history, the individuals interviewed for this study bitterly and resoundingly answered in the negative:

You don't hear nothing about black history in Chatham. That's what the problem is…It ain't in the schools. It won't never be in the schools.\textsuperscript{200}

It's a little bit disappointing that more black people in Chatham don’t really want to be…or haven't really thought about it, or don't really care. To me it's like they don't really care about it.\textsuperscript{201}

There's no black history in school here, there was no black history…Only what Gwenny [Gwendolyn Robinson, Chatham Kent Black Historical Society] talks about, which is old, old, old, old, old, history. John Brown, I don't personally, me, and black history, as far as Chatham, with like, I know bits and pieces because I worked with Gwenny for a year.\textsuperscript{202}

As far as the respondents were concerned, since American black history failed to make it into their history curriculum, it seemed more than obvious that they would be denied their own history at the local level. Having few opportunities to grow up with an awareness of Chatham's black history limited their involvement in conservation efforts.

**Conclusion:**

"That's it, we can't live like this any more."\textsuperscript{203}

The BME Church and the John Brown House serve as two examples of "Canada's long history of…the erasure of people of colour from places, memory and the map."\textsuperscript{204} The demolition of historic buildings in Ontario is not a rare occasion. And though it would be difficult to indisputably prove that certain buildings are targeted for their significance to non-dominant groups, demographics suggest that the losses of historical spaces are not proportional.

\textsuperscript{200} W. Read, interview by Carmen Poole, Chatham, ON, June 16, 2010.
\textsuperscript{201} M. Tiles, interview by Carmen Poole, Chatham, ON, June 14, 2010.
\textsuperscript{202} B. Metts, interview by Carmen Poole, Chatham, ON, June 17, 2010.
\textsuperscript{204} Peake, *Racializing the Canadian Landscape*, 183.
in their supposed impact. That "attempts to erase [the] black presence in the Canadian imaginary" has occurred (as violently and immediately felt as in Africville, or as quietly and inconspicuously as Queen's Bush) goes without question. For non-dominant groups fighting for historical recognition in a culture that marginalizes their contributions to the nation, the destruction of physical evidence of said contribution comes at a cost that is impossible to quantify. The lack of a tradition of cultural transmission is made all the more tragic when sites of historical note can no longer be identified, visited, enjoyed, or used as heritage resources.

Moreover, after a 1999 murder where the victim's "body was discovered in McGregor's Creek north of King Street East," a small group of residents started East Side Pride, a crime prevention organization that decided to respond to the rampant drug and drug-related crime that was choking their neighbourhood.\textsuperscript{205} Claiming over sixty drug houses had overrun the East End, the group's mission statement highlighted the fact that silence on the part of the East End's law-abiding citizens was part of the problem: "We soon discovered that by saying and doing nothing, we were responsible for allowing unwanted behaviour to continue and grow within our community."\textsuperscript{206} This community is not a racialized one inasmuch as it is defined by the shared East End address.

Ironically, historical representations of black history in Chatham are conspicuous by their absence. Though this chapter has focused on the civic mechanisms and history that assisted in the creation of racialized spaces and the physical destruction Chatham's local black history, these processes continued. Despite attempts by its residents to defend and protect their neighbourhood the East End has maintained its reputation in the city into the 21\textsuperscript{st} century. Today, a visitor taking part in the African Canadian Heritage Tour, a self-guided southwestern Ontario tour of black

\textsuperscript{206} East Side Pride, About Us, http://eastsidepride.ca/?page_id=19.
Canadian historical sites, would, upon arriving in Chatham, be directed "down" King Street and over the tracks to the Woodstock Institute Sertoma Help Centre, locally known as the W.I.S.H. Centre, built in 1993. The W.I.S.H. Centre was built on the same land as its namesake, the Woodstock Industrial School (later Institute), a school that had educated Chatham's black children from the mid-nineteenth century until 1927 when it was renamed the J.G. Taylor Community Centre (which itself was demolished in the early 1980s). The Chatham-Kent Black Historical Society is located in a modest room inside the W.I.S.H. Centre. After taking a look around the small but sharp and effective museum space, our above-mentioned visitor would likely be encouraged to participate in "Chatham's Early Black Community: Educational Walking Tour," which consists of a simple yet thorough pamphlet to read while walking the streets of Chatham's East End. The pamphlet contains a map with a legend, and each icon on the legend is numbered. Each number corresponds to a short paragraph within the pamphlet describing the site of a black church, business, school, or home of historical significance. The legend is simple, yet there is one disquieting qualification. Icons in black indicate buildings still standing; icons in white fall under the "Removed or Replaced Buildings" category. Of the 25 locations of note, the walking tour participant would only be able to visit five original buildings representing Chatham's early black history. Campbell A.M.E. Church, the First Baptist Church, Effie Jackson's Tea Parlour, the Cherry Store, and the Henry Weaver building are all that remain.
Despite its richness, evidenced in part by the number of buildings of note clustered in a single neighbourhood, black history in Chatham has suffered from disinterest and disregard. All of this is the result of a lack of a shared historical consciousness, one bred by the notion that marginal spaces become marginal due to their lack of significance. That the CKBHS exists to this day is a testament to their fortitude, and it has not been with ease that they continue to do the work of historical preservation.

Figure 26: Educational East End walking tour map, Chatham-Kent Black Historical Society.
Chapter 5:

"...They Haven't Got to Call You a Nigger if They Treat you Like a Nigger":
20th Century Legacy and Lived Black Experience in Chatham ON

Oral history has broadened the scope of African American history and made its history far more inclusive. It has served as an important corrective, as George C. Wright learned when writing his history of Louisville's African American community during the era of segregation. Had he relied solely on the written record, he concluded, the black presence in Kentucky would have been rendered virtually invisible.¹

According to historian and gender studies scholar Joan Sangster, some historians may be touched by a hint of naivety in their desire to encounter and approximate past lived experiences.² Though we would like nothing more than to fill in the historiographical gaps and rend the power imbalance that has perverted our historical knowledge, we must ourselves be aware of our own roles in influencing the narrative, in that we may potentially alter a history by a simple act of excavation. There is selectivity involved in shared personal histories, and it would be irresponsible to ignore the fact that the memories that are shared herein have been influenced by local perspectives that are rooted in a history of class inequality and economic disenfranchisement: lifetimes spent in awareness of implied inferiority.

The histories shared in this chapter often fell on one side of a wide spectrum. Despite inviting 112 individuals to participate in this study, only twenty-three individuals volunteered. In a very general sense, those who chose to participate did so because they had something to share and felt there was value in sharing. In turn, at least some of the 66 individuals who declined to participate either did not feel they had something to share or did not see the value in so doing.

There were several individuals who felt my project was too provocative and viewed me as a mischief-maker, a characterization I initially found quite surprising, at least until I began the interviews. There was, without question, a guardedness that coloured many of the interviews. There were a number of emotional interviews, something I had not originally expected in my relative inexperience as interviewer.

Overall, selectivity was certainly present in the interviews. I attributed this to apprehension brought on by the fear of providing identifying information where anonymity was preferred. For example, when asked about experiences in the workplace, interviewees were willing to provide general characterizations so long as details of specific events or practices were absent, even when the individual was years into retirement and well beyond their working years. Despite this guardedness, the lives I was invited to learn about fill an important gap in our understanding of the lived black experience in Chatham, Ontario. This experience is anything but singular. What it does tell us is that race and class shaped their experiences in meaningful ways that have not yet been fully explored within the twentieth century context of the city.

By evaluating the shifts in the black population living in Chatham between 1861 and 1911 and by analyzing the voices that represent a lesser-known blackness that grew out of the negotiations crucial to the survival of this small minority population, we can see how black identity in Canada was truly complex, not easily described or surmised. The point here is not that there were no shared experiences among blacks in Chatham. The point is that certain individuals did not see blackness as, or want blackness to become, profoundly defining. Their blackness determined how they would be treated in the world, but it did not always or necessarily define who they thought they were or would become in the world. Having already analyzed the population counts for blacks living in the city of Chatham from 1861, 1871, 1881, 1901, and
1911, this oral testimony from black Canadians living in Chatham, will show the ways in which historical specificity by way of primary research can (still) be used to expand our understanding of black history in Canada.

**Lived Experience: Black Oral History, Chatham Ontario:**

And my mother's side, they never talked about it either. Cause I said, "There's a lot of [family surname] in Chatham," and I said, "Well are they related to us?" Don't go there, you know? So you never went there, you know? So you don't know. They say don't go there and in that generation, you just, when they said something, you listen. When they said no, you know to shut up and not to push the issue...back then "No" meant shut up, no more, that's it.3

One of the most jarring observations I made as I collected the stories of twenty-three members of Chatham's black community was the contrast between knowing and unknowing when it came to family histories and North American race relations. As made abundantly clear in the opening statement made by Mr. P. Kingly during our interview on November 10th 2010, his youthful curiosity was met by a strict resistance and rejection of any request to learn more about his family. Given the experience of recruiting for this oral history project, I expected to encounter reluctance and certain silences. The extent of the silence came into even greater focus when, after sitting and chatting with another interviewee, Mr. Craig, for an hour and a half in the museum room of the Chatham-Kent Black Historical Society (CKBHS), I discovered we were very closely related. At the very end of the interview, when the question and answer format of the interview waned in favour of a more casual dialogue, Mr. Craig spoke of an Uncle Leroy. I had never met Mr. Craig before and was given his name as a potential interviewee from the CKBHS. I therefore thought nothing of his Uncle Leroy and listened intently to his story. It was only upon his mentioning Uncle Leroy's wife, Aunt Beulah, that I came to realize how closely related I was to a man who I believed to be a perfect stranger. Leroy and Beulah Poole are my

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3 P. Kingly, interview by Carmen Poole, Chatham, ON, November 10, 2010.
paternal grandparents. My grandpa Leroy had a sister named Yvonne, my great aunt. Yvonne is also Mr. Craig's great aunt. It was a stunning revelation. Given our relatively small age difference (Mr. Craig was born in 1961 and I was born in 1978), our never having met was surprising; despite our coming from a relatively small family, and the fact that we were both involved in local history projects, our paths, nevertheless, had never once crossed. The inquiry Mr. Kingly described above, his asking his mother how they were related to another black family in Chatham, was met with immediate dismissal. We can only guess the reasons for such a reaction to a child's curiosity. However, as stated, this type of silence and the legacies of its impact were not rare phenomena. They became increasingly evident in the interviews I conducted in a number of ways.

**Family Origins:**

One of the first silences I encountered in the interviews was a near perfect ignorance as to where an individual's family was from. In addition to this lack of knowledge, it was interesting to note that no interviewee discussed or displayed any concern regarding their ancestral origins. There was no evidence of any preoccupation or anxiety about knowing or not knowing where their families originated. Concern with origins would assume that one was necessarily from someplace else, and it was my impression that such questions did not particularly interest individuals who never questioned their membership to the Chatham-Kent community. Of the twenty respondents, no one knew exactly where their families had originated. All simply assumed "The States", because of childhood visits to family, aunts, uncles, and cousins who lived "stateside," along with assumptions made about the Underground Railroad and Chatham's place in its history. Similarly, there was no knowledge concerning when and how their families came to settle in Chatham. The only knowledge that existed was that there was no other place
worth identifying and that their families' settlement in the city occurred long enough ago to no longer warrant analysis.

It is not shocking that the original family members who had crossed the border in the mid-to-late nineteenth century could not be identified, yet that crossing certainly should not be viewed as ancient history. My paternal grandfather was born in 1901; his father was born in Canada in 1864 and his grandfather was born in the United States in 1812. To be sure, many years have passed between my birth and that of my great great grandfather. But, given that the majority of the interviewees were between the ages of 45 and 80, it would be plausible that there might have been some remnant of historical knowledge passed on about how their families came to Chatham. For example, when asked if he could share any family stories, Mr. P. Kingly had this to say:

Not from my, not that I know of, cause they never said anything, or talked about family…Like I said, my grandparents were dead on my dad's side and he never talked about his family, so I don't know if he had…but he never talked about it. And my mother's side, they never talked about it either.\(^4\)

While there were a number of family stories shared in other interviews, no one was able to speak to how their individual families came to establish their roots in Chatham, Ontario.

Another related and painfully obvious "unknowing" was that a number of respondents either did not know or had to guess the birthplaces of their parents. It comes as no surprise, then, that the same lack of knowledge was present when asked about the details about their parents' and grandparents' education:

Well, first guess for my mother would have been the 14\(^{th}\) [Concession] in Chatham Township and my dad had to be maybe born in Chatham. I don't know.\(^5\)

Chatham? Chatham Township? I don't know.\(^6\)

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\(^4\)Kingly, interview.  
\(^5\) W. Read, interview by Carmen Poole, Chatham, ON, June 16, 2010.  
\(^6\) M. Tiles, interview by Carmen Poole, Chatham, ON, June 14, 2010.
Oh wow. Not that much [education] probably. No, but I don't know...they went to school, but them days they probably had to work on the farm, but I don't really know.\textsuperscript{7}

When asked if his parents were born in Chatham, Mr. Kingly stated:

P.K.: I think so. I'm not sure. No, I think my dad might have been born in Montreal. I think. I said, we don't talk about, we didn't talk about where you was born, as families, so...I know he was baptized in Montreal.\textsuperscript{8}

C.P.: Do you know what brought them to Chatham?

P.K.: No.

C.P.: Mother?

P.K.: I think she was born in Chatham. I think her parents were from the south.

C.P.: So they came up from the south?

P.K.: I'm assuming they come up from the south. But they had 14 or 15 kids and they were all born here, so I'm assuming they, I don't know whether they were married when they came here, or if they got married after they came here, I'm not sure.\textsuperscript{9}

Given the size of his family, I asked Mr. Kingly if he could talk about any of his aunts and uncles:

Oh I couldn't, I couldn't. I could only name a few, because the majority had passed on before I was born. Out of them, I got 2 cousins. Out of her15 brothers and sisters only two of them had children and they only had one apiece. One in Detroit and one in Toronto. The one in Detroit I know, the one in Toronto I haven't seen in 40 years.\textsuperscript{10}

In these cases death, distance and a lack of desire to carry the past into the present on the part of preceding generations created an interesting presentism among succeeding generations. In that presentism, however, there was no palpable sense of loss or longing. Where one might expect

\textsuperscript{7}Read, interview.
\textsuperscript{8}Kingly, interview.
\textsuperscript{9}Kingly, interview.
\textsuperscript{10}Kingly, interview.
some consternation resulting from a failure to identify and define one's origins, there was only acceptance and perhaps a quiet resignation to past knowledge lost to time.

Racism:

I'm not a nigger,
I'm a neeegrow,
When I become a nigger,
I'll let you know.\textsuperscript{11}

It became evident over the course of conducting this oral history project that racism informed the lives of the interviewees in numerous ways. It was truly an education to hear and reflect upon the various ways race and racism played out in the lived experiences of these individuals. These conversations also illuminated the various techniques individuals used to cope with and understand the racism they encountered in their daily lives. The questions posed were intended to approach a better understanding about what life was like in Chatham in the twentieth century. There was scant discussion about "black" community or the centrality of religion in the lives of the interviewees. With the exception of five respondents, the remaining participants did not mention their participation in anything that would resemble uniquely black community events or activities, or church and religion. This is not to say that these individuals were not religious. Religion, though, did not appear as a significant theme in their personal reminiscences.

What follows is a discussion that will attempt to honour the experiences of the individuals I interviewed over the course of the summer of 2010. Many of their life experiences, from their school years to their entry into the workforce, the raising of families and their interpretation of world events seemed framed by their personal understanding of race and its impacts. The interviewees viewed blackness and race as a phenomenon that white people encountered and reacted violently or unjustly against rather than a physical trait that translated

\textsuperscript{11} Tiles, interview Childhood song sung in response to being called a nigger.
into something that defined each individual. It appears that the respondents were alone in recognizing that there was far more to their identities than their skin colour. Whether or not they ever contemplated the meaning of their blackness, they were never granted the luxury to forget about it.

**First Encounters: Racism**

In contrast to those aspects of familial history that were not known to the interviewees, their memories concerning their first encounters with racism were impressively sharp. In more than a few cases, despite the passing of decades the interviewee recalled the first and last name of the individual who so offended. Certain memories were so salient that the reminiscence took the form of reenactment: I was witnessing the re-experiencing of a very true moment in their very early life. For example, when discussing his early school experiences, Mr. F. Read who was born in 1944, shared a story about his time playing Little League:

I think the worst one I had, yeah, the worst one, I was, I played minor baseball and I guess I had to be about maybe 8 or 9, I think that was, that's it, it was a Peewee park, so give or take a couple years, just young eh, we had good baseball coaches, you know what I mean? And this coach, one summer after we got done playing ball, he took us to Rondeau [local area beach]. He had a cabin out there. So we had the whole team there. And ah, we're having a good time you know, laughing and joking and we had hot dogs and hamburgers and everything and uh, I think we were playing hide and go seek probably making a lot of noise. So anyways we all came back to the cabin, all the guys are in the cabin and all of a sudden there was a knock on the door and it's these two people, probably had cabins there too but were probably staying at their cabin, he come in and complain and says, "Ah, what's going on here?" They talk to the coach eh, he said nothing, we're all just having a good time, he said, "Well what's wrong?" He [the other cabin owner] said, "Them, them two black boys that's on the team are peeking in the windows." Now I can't remember if he said, probably in them days, the word black wasn't used yet, so it was "them nigger boys was peeking in the windows." They probably didn't want us running around, but everyone was doing the same thing, the whole team was, so anyways, when we…if you ever had that feeling when they come in and they say that, everybody's looking at you and that's something you never forget, and that's, you know…Oh yeah, cause you know everybody's looking at you…and I never forgot that.
The coach went outside and talked to him, and we don't know what was said,…but that's what they called us, cause there were only two of us, myself and [redacted].

While the racism did not originate from an adult as in the above story, Mrs. W. Read, who was born in 1939, shares a more succinct experience from middle school:

…just one girl at the end of the season. Was it 7 or 8? I smacked her in the face, cause she said something black or something "n", something like that. We was standing outside at recess and she standing there and all of a sudden she said something. I popped! Get out! That was the end of that. I remember her name: [redacted-first name]…To this day I never see her but I know who it was. Her name was [redacted-first name].

Given the fact that Mrs. Read would have been 71 years of age at the time of our interview, 60 years had passed since her run in with "nigger" on the playground. It was evident that recalling the name of the offending party became a point of pride for Mrs. Read; she seemed quite emphatic that the girl's name be remembered and shared, as though there was a special place in her memory for the young girl. Similarly, Mrs. S. Weams, born in 1960, recalls

…I can still remember being called a nigger in grade 2 as clear as can be. From a boy. And the only reason why I know is cause I hit him with my skipping rope, and ran all the way home from school. I remember that…My mom got mad because I hit him so hard with the skipping rope, but my dad supported it 100%.

It was very clear from the interviews that grade school was the proving ground for black pupils and racists alike. Mr. M. Craig shared his first encounter with racism, made even more complex by gender expectations:

..the first, I never had anything like that, the first time I ever, ever been addressed with the "n" word was by a girl and I think I was like in grade 5 or 6 and that was at Queen Elizabeth [Public] School and I was so shocked I didn't know what to do. You felt pretty helpless, because if a boy would have said it, you know what to do…Well, at that age, you pound them. You'd go get your pound of flesh out of them. But with a girl, cause you're taught you don't hit girls, you keep your hands to yourself, and you knew that they hurt you, and you kinda wondered why, and you didn't uh, you just felt completely powerless…Yeah it bothered me, and obviously it was something I never forgot because I can remember her name…I won't name her. I did see her years later, and I

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12 F. Bayn, interview by Carmen Poole, Chatham, ON, June 16, 2010.
13 Read, interview.
14 S. Weams, interview by Carmen Poole, Chatham, ON, August 18, 2010.
don't think that she ever remember it, she might have remembered it but let it go. It stuck with me.¹⁵

Figure 27: Two black students (centre frame) attending McKeough School, Chatham, Ontario, 1920-1925. Permission to use this image granted by B. Milburn from their personal collection.

¹⁵ Craig, interview.
Figure 28: "A class photo; students are seated in front of the doors to the school. The teacher stands to the side." Chatham-Kent Museum 1995.25.19.

Figure 29: "Unknown. Class Photo." Chatham-Kent Museum 2003.133.5.
Figure 30: "Unknown. Class Photo." Chatham-Kent Museum 2003.133.6.

Figure 31: "Schools, John N. Given Public School, graduating class in gym, Churchill Drive, Chatham." Chatham-Kent Museum 1990.77.1857.
Despite all that we know about the segregation of schools in Canada, we know very little about what it was like to actually attend schools that may have at times been hostile or less than inviting to black students. Part of this study was prompted by a reaction Figure 27. When looking at these photos, it was difficult to imagine what it is like to be so alone and surrounded by people who may not care about your experience or perhaps view your existence or presence as a disruption.

Early school experiences netted a mixed response from the interviewees. Mr. Read felt that growing up "every kid thinks it's great". Mr. Read grew up on the East End of Chatham and it was only when he started school that he realized how those differences would manifest in his day-to-day life:

No, it wasn't mostly white, they uh, I think the boundary for, first of all where the federal building is there, the post office on Wellington Street there right there, that's the first public school I went to, that was Central School…yeah, that's a public school now, they wouldn't let me go to Victoria Park because I was on the wrong side. You heard that expression? The wrong side of the street…If you're going up Duke Street up Wellington, if you lived on the left hand side of the blocks you went to Central, but if you lived on the right hand side you went to Victoria School.

Mr. Read spoke fondly of his early years at school, explaining that he attended school with a number of other black students who also lived on the East End and "went through the same process" as Mr. Read on account of where they lived. The process repeated itself when Mr. Read went on to high school. Still living on Duke Street, Mr. Read attended John McGregor High School. Knowing what I did about the distance between his home on Duke St. and John McGregor High School, I was somewhat taken aback, and asked Mr. Read whether or not John McGregor High School had always been located where it is presently. When he said yes, I repeated the question incredulously, "And you had to walk there from Duke? That's a long

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16 Bayn, interview.
17 Bayn, interview.
18 Bayn, interview.
When asked if he could have attended Chatham Collegiate Institute, a high school much closer to his home on Duke Street, Mr. Read replied, "CCI is on...where Victoria Park sit, you come up, CCI is, CCI and CVS they were both on Murray Street." He then remarked again that he could not have attended CCI because he did not live in the "right boundary."

F.R.: That's why I couldn't go to Victoria because I lived, I guess you could say I lived on the wrong side of the street.

C.P.: I mean...to have to walk from Duke to McGregor, just seeing it in my head...and Duke to CCI. It would seem like CCI would be remarkably closer.

F.R.: Oh yeah. It didn't matter. It's where they drew the line.

CCI was located at 51 Prince Street, a mere twelve to thirteen minute walk from Mr. Read's exact address on Duke Street. John McGregor High School was located on 300 Cecile Street, a considerable forty-two minute walk from Mr. Read's front door. In grade school, had Mr. Read lived on the right side of the tracks, he would have been able to trade his twenty-minute walk to Central School for a seven-minute walk to Victoria Park Public School. Unfortunately for Mr. Read, and the other students who lived on "the wrong side," the school districts in Chatham bisected the city north and south rather than east and west, in many ways using the Thames River as a proper boundary between the south and east ends of the city from the north end of the city.

Mrs. Read's school experience was summed up briefly. She attended McKeough Public School until grade 8 when she quit in favour of work in the factories.

Yup, I hated school. You put that in there? I hate it, I hated it. I was kinda sick. I hated school. I didn't find anything easy anyways. I just hated school, yeah, I did...I says I hated school.22

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19 Bayn, interview.
20 Bayn, interview.
21 Bayn, interview.
22 Read, interview.
Mrs. Read does not elaborate on why she hated school, whether it was the teachers, the students, or illness. She informed me that she had gone to the doctor's and that she had "bad nerves", though that does not entirely explain her rather ardent aversion to school.

Despite being one of the youngest interviewees—fifty years of age at the time of the interview—Mrs. S. Weams recalls the extreme strictness of the schools and their adherence to corporal punishment:

Extremely strict. I, at the time, there was still spanking in the school, the belt. And I remember my father always said if you got the belt at school you got it at home, so I definitely followed the school rules.23

Mrs. Weams attended John N. Given Public School and remembers going to school with about five other black students, as well as her own siblings. When she switched to McKeough School:

McKeough was a tough school. For one, I didn't like the walk from Wood Street all the way over to McKeough School. Very old school like, girls on one side, boys on the other, and you had to line up and I can still remember that. And very strict. Don't ever remember any issue with colour at the school, but I was only there for two years because of going to Indian Creek after that.24

At Indian Creek, Ms. Weams attended school with one other black girl and her sister. Her father had moved them to a better part of town; it was there, especially in high school at John McGregor, that Mrs. Weams came into her adolescent understanding of the intersections of race and social class, and their impact on her social interactions.

The street was kind of known as you moved up, kind of like "The Jeffersons" [television show] kind of things. We had moved up and I knew that my life was better going to Indian Creek. Definitely knew that…Yeah, good school, great teachers…25

Then I went to McGregor. McGregor was probably the first time I really recognized prejudice. From, more so from blacks than white. I guess I never really knew how different my life was until I went to McGregor and there was so many black kids and not being raised around black people at all was very much, yeah, life was tough the first three years at John McGregor. Blacks referred to me as "white folks nigger" because of being

23 Weams, interview.
24 Weams, interview.
25 Weams, interview.
raised in all-white neighbourhood and my best friend at the time…she went to CCI and I went there, so I didn't know any black kids. She [her best friend] went to CCI so when I started school I didn't know anyone black and um, yeah, more prejudice from the blacks. I do remember only one incident with a white guy calling me nigger in probably grade 9 and other than that, no.\textsuperscript{26}

It is certain that being a young adolescent in the mid-to-late 1970s had quite an impact on Mrs. Weams' identity development. She intimates as much in the following description of her settling in to John McGregor High School:

Blacks were like the cool of the school and funny, cause even till this day you hear about it. The dominant of, they just had their part in the school, their part in the cafeteria…I can still remember there was a piano in the cafeteria and yeah, I can remember [black students] playing the piano and us singing "oh Happy Day," and it was the first time I really came to terms with who I was as a black person. My mother always pressed my hair. And I cut it off, all my hair, and got an afro. Just totally, I recognized I was different. I don't think I recognized I was different in public school. But, oh I knew, and I knew if I wanted to be in with the black kids, I had to change my looks, so yeah, I cut it…I don't remember what I was thinking, because I couldn't sport the look. But yeah, I remember that…And I totally changed. I gave up all my white friends and hung around with only black people. Yeah, which my parents had a hard time with that. A really hard time, yeah yeah. Cause my father felt that he worked so hard. I think cause of his generation, my father's always had an issue with prejudice and so he thought, here I worked this hard for yous to have this brand new home and you'd rather be with people down on the East End of Chatham.\textsuperscript{27}

When it came to racial awakening, A. Ford recalls the unique way she at once confronted the silence around race in her own family and encountered her own blackness. Ms. Ford was considerably younger than her two brothers. She did not know her brothers were her brothers until a friend informed her:

[Growing up] Well, to me, you know, it seemed peachy, my brothers were older, I don't remember my oldest brother living home really. I found, yes, my little friend, my little white friend down the road [redacted], he's the one that told me that he was my brother. He's also the one that told me I was coloured, cause I didn't know that I was [laughter]. I knew we had coloured friends, black friends. And I know it sounds stupid, but my mother was fair, my parents were fair-skinned…Yeah, and Daddy had like, farmer's tan, but he was white underneath that and it just never really came up. I knew we had, I knew there was a degree of colour…I thought they were black people, coloured people, I didn't know

\textsuperscript{26} Weams, interview.
\textsuperscript{27} Weams, interview.
we were. I just thought we had a lot of coloured friends. Cause, you know what I mean, like there was all different colours, I don't know. So that was the distinction. But he's the one that let me know. He said, "Oh yeah, you're coloured too." But he's also the one who let me know that [redacted] was my brother. I thought he was a cousin because he lived in Toronto and when he came home he went to my cousin's house and he hung with him...  

It is remarkable that while Ms. Ford was identified as black among her peers, she herself did not come into that realization until informed by a third party, despite the fact that she was surrounded with black family members. She subsequently described the simultaneous realization that she had a brother she thought was an older cousin and that she was also black as "traumatic."  

P. Kingly's early school experience also describes another type of knowing that was evident in a number of the testimonies. According to Mr. Kingly, students had a way of understanding the order of things:

Yeah I remember Queen Elizabeth and ah, it was majority white, it was sorta the boundary line between the East End and the other side of town and the kids they got along good, the kids were all good, it's ah, some of the teachers had preconceived ideas about how blacks should be treated, I just noticed that it was a little difference there being treated by some of the teachers, not all of them, just some of them, and one of the principals too, but he wasn't there very long, the first principal that went there, but this was, this would have been '52, 1952 or '53 somewhere back in there.

When I asked whether the "different" treatment could be described as unfair or lesser treatment, Mr. Kingly was adamant,

I would say lesser, lesser, lesser treatment, they did, ah, I don't think they took as deep an interest in black kids as they did, they're in school, they're here, but don't expect much from them. That's the impression that I got.

He also described how the children of the city operated within their own spheres, knowing their place, which was determined by the school they attended.

28 A. Ford, interview by Carmen Poole, Chatham, ON, June 4, 2010.
29 Kingly, interview.
30 Kingly, interview.
31 Kingly, interview.
I knew kids from Victoria Park, Queen Mary and there was a St. Joseph's it was a Catholic School, and St. Ambrose, another Catholic school. And there was a country school too, out by the cemetery, like you knew all them. You didn't go to school with some of them...there's a dividing line from schools. I could live on this side of the street and go to this school, and they could live on that side of the street and go to that school. And Degge Street and Hyslop Street was one neighbourhood and all the kids in the neighbourhood they stuck together, that was their territory. King Street, Wellington Street; King Street from Prince St. down Duke Street, from King Street over to Park Street, that was another neighbourhood. Colborne Street, Murray Street that was another neighbourhood. And then you went from Adelaide Street up over, and that was another neighbourhood. The kids, they had their...you had your own little pockets, you know? And it'd...but then that's how it was, these pockets, you knew all these kids, but you didn't play with them, but you knew them, and some of the neighbourhoods was like gangs, you fought, you know? So, like we, see and your mother, she lived on Fielder that was another area, but we didn't know that existed till we started going to high school because we didn't interact, like, those, with the blacks, if you lived on the other side of town, kids, as kids, your parents might know their parents, but as kids we didn't know them kids.32

Mr. Craig describes a similar phenomenon, at least in terms of some built-in knowledge about place and belonging. Without being taught, it appears the children of Chatham knew their place.

I think when you lived, when you went to that school [Queen Elizabeth], it was terrible how you kind of class things, even as kids you kind of class them, if you headed out the back of the school, straight out the back, you weren't part of the rich kids, if you headed out the side, chances are they might have had money, if you headed out the front of the school they were the rich kids.33

When describing what it was like to walk to and from school, Ms. Tiles talked about the fear of being called a name compounded by the knowledge that she was painfully outnumbered as a black student:

M.T.: I'm trying to think...for the most part, my Mom always said, "Don't let anybody call you a name." You know, "Tell your brother, or you fight." Don't let anybody call you the "N" word, you know? And so it always seemed to be something that was in the back of my mind anyway, growing up, that the threat was always there that I would be called a name.34

C.P.: Because of your Mom's warning?

32 Kingly, interview.
33 Craig, interview.
34 Tiles, interview.
M.T.: No, because it actually happened. You know, it actually did occur. But then she would just remind us, don't come running home, you know? Just take care of it, you know, like either fight, or get your brother, or whatever. But I think it was always the threat of it being possible. Whether it happened, and I'm not saying it happened daily, I'm not saying that, I'm just saying the threat was always at the back of your mind that it could happen and would happen.35

When asked if she grew up with a lot of black children in Chatham, Ms. Tiles named a few black families that lived around her family home:

Only a few, only a few. They probably lived on our street or the next street over. We knew the ones, we knew the black people that went there [to her school]…But for the most part, I was usually the only, the only black person in my class from kindergarten well, maybe not kindergarten because I think [redacted] was in my class, but for the most part of public school, and even in high school, there might have been two of us in the class, so it really sets you…36

Inside the classroom was also a uniquely uncomfortable space. As she reminisced about her school days, Ms. Tiles made the case that shared experiences are impossible when one holds a token position. Due to her precarious position as one of only a few black faces in the room, her educational experience was shaped by the perceived hostile environment in the classroom.

I think any hard times I had were times that you didn't even want to have happen in school, like when they were talking about Africa, or black history you just knew everybody was just looking at you and you were the only one in the class. You know? That's a little bit intimidating…you just really felt centered out, and at that time, to be quite honest with you, I don't know that I was ever proud that I was black to be quite honest with you because it wasn't something that people relished, or really devoured their blackness. They didn't! They really didn't. So, and you sort of grew up just, you didn't want to have that history class, you didn't want to have history class! None of us, I'm not just speaking for…none of us wanted to have history class, we all felt the same, soon as they brought up Africa or black we were like, sitting there [covers face] covering our heads, no really! It wasn't funny, really it wasn't. But that was our life then. And that's sad to say that I wasn't proud. I was proud of my family, I love my family…37

When they said "Africa" we shut our ears. I'll tell you. No really, it wasn't a good thing, to me growing up as a kid, it wasn't a positive experience growing up and learning about any…and there wasn't that much that we learned anyway in school as far as I can remember, it wasn't like a lot of black history, the little bit they tried to infiltrate into

35 Tiles, interview.
36 Tiles, interview.
37 Tiles, interview.
the...we didn't want to hear it, we didn't want to hear the word black, we didn't want to hear the word Africa, because we knew, at that time, and probably still now, it was negative, it was negative, yeah.\textsuperscript{38}

J. Rosey attended Central School and Chatham Collegiate Institute in the early 1940s. The experiences he described suggest that black students could anticipate a certain type of treatment and details how it was managed. His time at Central School, while marked by the expected run-ins with racism, was tempered by a supportive administration.

Central school. Had a very nice, fair principal. Her name was [redacted]. Fairest teacher in the world, she was the principal. If somebody called you nigger we, you, she knew what was gonna happen if they called us nigger, they were gonna have a fight. And all he had to do, she would, we had to go to her office if you got in a fight, and all you had to do was tell her they called me nigger, she'd look right at him, said, did, is that right? And if they said yes, she'd look at you and say you could go to your room, and she'd strap them every time. But she would strap them but she'd never strapped the black kid, but she'd told the black kid, you could go to your room now...Oh if they did something wrong, sure she'd strap them [the black kids] but not for if you got called out of your name, and well they couldn't lie and say they didn't say it, if you heard them say it, and you, and so, we had a lot of fights...\textsuperscript{39}

I wasn't forever fighting, but I didn't run from any fights. But uh, we didn't have it easy going to school, to Central School, and uh, and I can't say that when I went to high school-- I went to CCI, Chatham Collegiate Institute-- I can't say that they were prejudiced. There was a lot of prejudice over at the high school, there was not a lot of prejudice at that school [CCI].\textsuperscript{40}

Skillfully, Mr. Rosey described a deep knowledge of class and racial differences that would be difficult to explain because it did not materialize verbally or physically. At times it was barely perceptible. However, J. Rosey tells us that:

...well the better off kids, their parents sent them to high school, it was a high school that was academic, and the vocational school was technical and so the richer kids were the ones who went to high school and you know you just you just FEEL...they haven't got to, gotta call you nigger if they treat you like a nigger or something you know, they don't have to call you the name, for to treat you like. And so I went there for 5 years and uh, I don't think I got called the name once, but I never failed to see, you can tell a person even looks at you without them opening their mouth, you can tell that they talking down to you,

\textsuperscript{38}Tiles, interview.
\textsuperscript{39}J. Rosey, interview by Carmen Poole, Chatham, ON, June 8, 2010.
\textsuperscript{40}Rosey, interview.
and everything else, and so I didn't do a lot of fighting over at high school…Oh yeah, I had white friends but like I says, people can let you know that you should stay in your place, whatever your place is, without saying anything, just the way they look at you, and I shoulda got in a fight the first time I was there.\textsuperscript{41}

Race not only shaped individual school experiences. It also shaped the real and perceived future opportunities of black students due to both their parents' understanding and perception of education and administrators' treatment of black students. P. Kingly informed me that while his parents definitely encouraged their children to go to school, their understanding of "higher learning" was limited.

The big thing they pushed was to go to school, that's the big thing they pushed, go to school, that was it. Go to school, get an education cause I think my dad only had a grade 8 education, which when he was, it was good back then, and I don't...my mother didn't have a high school education...so go to school, go to school, go to school. And we graduated our grade 12, that was an excellent education back then for us. They were quite pleased, but even with that kind of education and I can't fault my parents because we coulda went further but they really didn't know, ah, about higher learning, they knew about public school, high school, but anything above that was sort of out of their comprehension. They didn't understand what that meant. Where me, grade 12 was good for me, but I knew for my kids, grade 12 wasn't good enough. Cause education was getting higher so you had to go up to post education, if you wanted to get ahead. High school education, it's nice to have, but it's not going to open doors for you, everybody has a high school education, you have to excel, and that's what I did with my kids, they all went to university so, except for the last one, the last one, there's one in every family, you know.\textsuperscript{42}

Mr. Kingly clearly and bitterly tied the "lesser treatment" he observed in public school to his own experiences. Despite his academic abilities, he credits the lack of encouragement to his own limited opportunities.

When I look back, when I went to school, in public school, I look back at the marks that I used to get and never had any problem. I look back; if I'd have been pushed, had someone behind me to make me really excel I could have done something different with my life. I don't have any regrets, but I probably could have did something different.\textsuperscript{43}

\textsuperscript{41}Rosey, interview. Emphasis added.
\textsuperscript{42}Kingly, interview.
\textsuperscript{43}Kingly, interview.
Ms. S. Weams' experience was considerably different, as there was little insistence on the part of her parents where school was concerned. She dropped out in grade 11 to get married:

[School] was a place to go. In our home, it was not pushed to go to school…No desire to go to college. Dad had a grade 10. Mom had a grade 12. It just wasn't pushed. I remembered that my parents having an insurance policy for me for $5000 and they asked me what I wanted to do with it. And I said I wanted to get married, so I, so Dad cashed in the policy and I got married. So…that was what I wanted. I didn't want to go to school at that time. I didn't realize at that point what education was about and no desire, wasn't fully in with people who were going to school either which…yeah, [school] was not positive in my life, so…I was just glad with my husband than go off to school. We both paid the price for it, that's for sure.\(^4\)

Conversely, Ms. B. Metts discovered that despite her positive school experience, it was not until she was a mother that she witnessed first hand what she felt to be unfair treatment at the hands of teachers and school administrators. When her son was finishing high school, she found out her son had been streamed into non-college preparation courses. Her father's advice regarding the matter was not altogether hopeful.

I inquire about him going to college, and they said, "He can't go, he's had basic courses." I said what do you mean, basic courses? I said, "What'd you do?" They lumped them in a box just to get them out. They didn't care about him going to college. He was so upset, so we went back and got some computer courses, but they basically, what they did, they tried to hold him back. My dad said they put you in a box just to get you out. They don't want to work with you because they don't want to see a black person succeed. That's one thing that affected him…

\(^4\)Weams, interview.
Figure 32: "Sepia photograph of a school class assembled outside of a brick building with two adult women standing in an open doorway behind - in total there are 33 children of which 7 are African Canadian - mounted on a card backing." Chatham-Kent Museum 2003.114.7.

At Work:

The variety of jobs available to blacks in Chatham was limited. Work in the service industry, factory work, general labour, farming, clerical work and domestic work prevailed as the most common types of employment. Compared to the variety of employment evident among blacks living in Chatham in 1861, the following chart illustrates the extent to which the job market narrowed for blacks at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Table 11: 1901 Occupations of Black Males, Chatham

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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brick Maker</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butcher</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpenter</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cook</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooper</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gunsmith</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lather/Latherer</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mason</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanic</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Painter</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plasterer</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Unskilled Workers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coachman</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic/General Servant</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fish Sealer</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horse Jockey</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horse Trainer</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labourer</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mail Carrier</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Messenger</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Porter</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Farmers and Planters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cattle Herder</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmer/Farm Labour</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feed Stable</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

45 Pastor/Minister.
Compared to the 1861 census, there were eighteen fewer occupations listed, the largest decline appearing in the Artisan, Clerks and Proprietors, and Professional and Merchant categories.\textsuperscript{46}

Table 12: 1901 Occupations of Black Females, Chatham

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupational Classification</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Skilled/Semi-Skilled/Clerk/Proprietor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apprentice</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cook/Private Family Cook</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boarding House</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dressmaker</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hairdresser</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurse</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Teacher</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tailoress</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>15</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unskilled</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic</td>
<td>34\textsuperscript{47}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factory Employment</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour</td>
<td>22\textsuperscript{48}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laundress</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wash Woman/Washing</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>69</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>84</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Despite the fact that only 84 women were reported as having an occupation in 1901 compared to 132 in the 1861 census, almost the same number of women could be found in the unskilled occupations (70 in 1861, 69 in 1901). Skilled occupations such as seamstress and cook declined considerably between 1861 and 1901, as did the number of job titles for women.

\textsuperscript{46} 183 listed occupations compared to 326 who listed occupations in 1861, note the population difference and the proportional difference.

\textsuperscript{47} Alternately listed as "Char Woman", "Domestic", "General Servant", "House Servant", "Housekeeper", "Labour/Domestic","Servant"

\textsuperscript{48} Alternately listed as "Day Labour", "Labour", "Labour/Laundry", "Labour/Milliner", "Labour/Waiter".
These statistics mirror Tracey Adams' findings in a similar assessment of black employment in London, Ontario between 1861 and 1901. Adams concluded that "the combined effect of economic and social change in the late nineteenth century" reduced the "labour market opportunities of African Canadian men," and that there were "[m]ore jobs, and higher status jobs…open to men of colour in the mid- nineteenth century" than in the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{49}

Although factory work was increasing in the late nineteenth century and agricultural jobs were steadily decreasing, Adams found that

\begin{quote}
[i]n this era of industrialization, professionalization, and the gradual expansion of the services sector, it is important to note what work African-origin men and women were \textit{not} doing. They were not employed as store or office clerks, or as professionals, and they were not employed to any great extent in factories.\textsuperscript{50}
\end{quote}

Industrialization did not expand the job market for blacks in London or Chatham. As the mid nineteenth century gave way to beginning and middle of the twentieth century, the job sector narrowed considerably for both black men and black women in southwestern Ontario.

The job experiences of the interviewees, their parents, grandparents, and siblings reflect the trends suggested in the census data. The William Pitt Hotel employed a number of blacks as bellhops, laundry workers, cleaners, cooks, and kitchen help. Mr. F. Read's father worked as a janitor in the post office and a downtown department store, and Read worked at the William Pitt Hotel as a bellhop. He recalls a number of black employees who worked at the William Pitt Hotel in the laundry, as bellhops and in the kitchen. Mr. S. Sims also worked at the William Pitt Hotel, first as a bus boy while in high school, and later as a bell boy, which he informed me was "better than being a bus boy."\textsuperscript{51} When asked what working at the hotel was like, Mr. S. Sims obliquely responded that it was "still the hotel climate," and that he simply did "for hotel people

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{50} Adams, "Making a Living," 41.
\textsuperscript{51} S. Sims, interview by Carmen Poole, Chatham, ON, June 17, 2010.
\end{footnotes}
as I had to." The only detail Mr. Sims was willing to part with was that despite his age, or the age of the other black men who worked at the hotel, they were forced to grow accustomed to being called "Sam, George, Boy, from the boss and the guests."  

Ms. W. Read's brother worked as a handyman and factories as a young man before joining the Navy; she moved between a number of factories when she left school in grade 8.

At one time, I wasn't 16 yet, and um, I think you had to be 16 to work there, so I went to Libby's and said I was 15...Libby's, Campbell's and...I worked at all of them. Ma worked at Libby's too, I forgot that one.  

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52Sims, interview.  
53Sims, interview.  
54Read, interview.
As with any workplace, there were positions within the canning factories that were preferable to others. Though they were hard to get, Ms. Read was able to move from the manual labour of peeling tomatoes to working on the filling machines.

W.M.: Well, I tried to get the jobs that I like, not the tomatoes and all that crap, you know, peeling. I used to try to work on the fillers on the machines, like soup or like that.\footnote{Read, interview.}

C.P.: Like manual peeling?

W.M.: Yeah yeah yeah. They're probably scalded, and yeah, I did that. But I tried to get out of there or work in the warehouse with the boxing, the boxes that come up, or ah, I usually worked on the machines.\footnote{Read, interview.}

Ms. W. Read talked about farm labour, stating that the pay for rigorous manual fieldwork was laughable. Mentioning a prominent family in Chatham, a family who owned and still owns business interests in the city, Ms. Read talked about the pittance that family paid their field hands and related their history of questionable business practices to their ongoing local prominence and financial wealth. Unlike some of her coworkers, however, Ms. Read did not last long. In light of the heat and long hours, Ms. Read quit upon receiving her pay.

W.M.: Hoeing, picking tomatoes. I remember me and [a cousin] we went, you had to get on the bus to go to [redacted's] farm, you know why they got all the money they got?!...We had to weed onions, we had to weed something, and it was hot, and after you on the bus, well, you're not going to get back home until the day is done. Well we didn't make nothing that day. That was the end of the story for me. I didn't go back out there. But that's why they got money today...[name redacted].

CP: So they didn't pay you?

W.M.: Not that good, no....You know what, I went to Libby's, how much I made? Seventy-five cents an hour...yeah...you hear me? HOUR." But I just worked at the factories, at the tobacco factory...my mother did...on the line, on the line, just checking it [the tobacco] out. I worked at Libby's, Campbell, Dresden. All of them...\footnote{Read, interview.}
From the factories, Mrs. Read went into the service industry as a stock person at a chain
department store in 1966. She worked "6 full time years, 15 part time years" and at one point
counted her mother and younger sister as coworkers.\textsuperscript{58}

Other interviewees described a variety of service and manual employment such as
picking peaches, laying sod on the 401, working at a chicken hatchery, cutting grass, janitorial
services and truck driving. The types of racism they encountered while working were described
as vague and barely perceptible to the untrained, inexperienced individual. Mrs. Read claimed
"most of them [whites] were pretty good…you could pick up on people…you can pick up on a
lot."\textsuperscript{59} P. Kingly stated that racism was never explicit: "not outright, just the little innuendoes,
you know, but nothing outright."\textsuperscript{60} However, Mr. M. Craig describes a not-so-oblique instance of
racial tension when he worked at an area factory:

I had one incident as an adult, there was a fella that used to talk a bit of smack at the
factory I worked at, he was from the east coast area I believe and he was telling people he
was part of the KKK from out there and there happened to only be, there was only 3 guys
of colour at the factory, there was myself and [redacted] and [redacted] from India, there
was only 3 guys. This guy had basically stated that…he had said to somebody that a guy
that actually lived down east [East End of Chatham] he was an older guy but he knew
everybody and he was good, he was a good guy, he says, "Kingly, you should have heard
what he said," he says "Why is their nigger bigger than our nigger…?" And I called him
on it…I did. I just asked him I had heard about this KKK stuff and me being somewhat, I
wouldn't say I was hot headed, but I was young, and I asked him if there was a problem
with me working there, and at that point I was of the opinion that if he didn't give me the
right answer, that I might discuss this with him further [laughter]. Yes, we were having a
talk, somehow he didn't seem to
figure that there was a problem after I was discussing it
with him, everything was ok…for the most part if there was any problems, people kept a
lot of things to themselves, especially around here, if there is something, if they have
some feeling about things, they'll keep it to themselves.\textsuperscript{61}

When P. Kingly was asked by a Human Resources manager about whether his boss at his job
was prejudiced, Kingly replied, "I'm not sure if I'm real comfortable with the question, but I'll tell

\textsuperscript{58}Read, interview.
\textsuperscript{59}Read, interview.
\textsuperscript{60}Kingly, interview.
\textsuperscript{61}Kingly, interview.
you this...I think even a dog knows the difference between being tripped over and being kicked.\textsuperscript{62} He said that the boss "definitely had a problem, but he wouldn't, he was one of those ones who tried to conceal it and had a hard time doing it...it was killing him I think."\textsuperscript{63} While working in Wallaceburg, P. Kingly claimed that the prejudice was less rampant based on the shared work experience of the employees. The prejudice he did see was different because it was not directed at blacks:

> You know, I had heard a lot of bad things about Wallaceburg, and before I even went here, and I was of the opinion that I'm going to, I'm going to give them a chance here, I'm not going to paint these people all with the same brush until I worked with them. Majority of the people I ever worked with down there, the ones that I worked with personally, were fine. I never had not one problem that way, not one, um...I think it was because everybody's in the same boat, you're all trying to make a living there, you spend way too much on stupid stuff. Before I went there, "those people in Wallaceburg are pretty prejudiced." I think they had more of a problem with the Indian folks. I heard more of that end of the things, than I did, say, with black folks, you know? And they definitely painted them...and that's a terrible thing...life is too short.\textsuperscript{64}

In an interview conducted on June 8\textsuperscript{th} 2010, Mr. J. Rosey discussed his work experience as a teenager growing up in Chatham. He left school before finishing Grade Twelve at the behest of his father. Though he had brothers, J. Rosey was blamed for having left the battery in the family's tractor over the winter. J. Rosey's father insisted that his son pay to have the destroyed battery replaced:

> I finished my second year in grade 12 and I didn’t go back, I had a little trouble at home, not trouble but, we had a tractor, and out on the farm we been moved out on the farm in '41, and uh, the battery got left in the tractor in the winter time you know, cold, and the battery froze and broke, and my father, I don’t know why he had...I had older brothers and younger brothers, he thought I should have taken the battery out of the tractor, well I never thought about taking the battery out of the tractor no more than the other brothers did...I had to pay for the battery, well I’m going to school, I’m not making a dime, now how I’m going to pay for a battery? So I never went back to school again.\textsuperscript{65}

\textsuperscript{62} Kingly, interview.
\textsuperscript{63} Kingly, interview.
\textsuperscript{64} Kingly, interview.
\textsuperscript{65} Rosey, interview.
J. Rosey got a job at the local Brickyard and prefices a story about his work experience as follows:

but uh, I don’t know, I don’t think I was touchy, I wouldn’t call myself touchy, but I took up every time I felt that I was being short changed, I took up for myself, I fought on every job I ever had in my life, I fought over at the brick yard, [the boss] and I, we got into it, it was simple, it was just uh, wasn't no name calling or anything...  

Known around town for his insistence on "taking up for himself," J. Rosey's frustration with the other black workers at the brickyard is evident in his recounting of particularly bothersome treatment by his manager. His job at the brickyard was to operate the brick-making machine. There were "four men out in the clay pits to send the clay up for to make the bricks and the tile." In essence, J. Rosey worked the brick dryers and, even on the coldest day, his workstation was very much like a furnace:

we were stripped right down to our shirts, to just our clothes, you know, it was like I said, it was cold outside, so we'd all have winter clothes on to come to work but we'd take them off because it's gonna be hot in there when we start working.

Obviously it was beneficial to work near the dryers in the winter, though one can only imagine that running the dryers in the summer would have been a more onerous task than being outside in the clay pits. In any case, the owner of the brickyard approached the black workers at the dryers and instructed them to go outside and help the other men load from the clay pit:

so [the boss] come up from the clay pit, well he’d been out there where it cold, that was his business, it was his clay pit, and when we got, I got the machine ready for it to go, getting ready to get the clay up there, and...he was mad cause we were warm and he was cold, so he said something to the effect “You guys up here where it’s nice and warm, you go out and help and get that pit ready,” so we went and put on our clothes that we wore to work, you had to put on some clothes to go out there to that clay pit, we put our clothes on, out to the pit we went...
No sooner did J. Rosey and his black co-workers go to pick up tools to begin helping at the clay pit, he was told by the owner: "Ok J, you can take your men back up there and start making bricks." J. Rosey described the outcome of this exchange as follows:

well, we hadn’t done a thing to help him, but he was just mad when he come up and we were cozy and he was cold, well, he rubbed me the wrong way, and I told him to make up his mind, what he wanted us to do, go out to the pit or make brick, we couldn’t do both. And it took us 5 minutes or so to put on all our over-clothes, so we had a row right then. But ah, he called up my father said he thought I was losing my mind, he said I was over there swearing, I never swore in my life, you know, I was never a swearing man, so I wasn’t swearing or anything, but I was just telling him what I thought…

Unimpressed by his boss' treatment of the black employees, J. Rosey did take up for himself. However, he was very much aware of the potential danger of doing so, beyond being a grown man and having his boss call his father as part of his admonishment for talking back.

but like I said,…I was working, I was married, and I if I didn’t have a kid, I had a kid on the way, and uh, so I was not in a position to quit the job but I still took up for myself, and I was working with 3 guys, H.K., V.P., and [unknown]. But two guys that weren’t married even, so I thought it was their place for to take up for themselves, and they wouldn’t take up for themselves, so I took up for em. Now I got a wife and a kid at home, and they ain’t got a soul to keep but themselves, see, we didn’t have much money, I’m talking about [my wife] and I…and, none of us had much money, but I would think that if I’d have, I would have liked to have been without a wife and a kid too, then I would have really got into it with him, I had a wife and kid, I was in no position to quit the job.

J. Rosey's awareness of what was at stake makes plain the individual cost of speaking out. The cost was surely not one lost on his co-workers. Despite having relatively less to lose than Mr. Rosey, according to him, they never spoke out or defended their own interests for fear of losing their jobs. To be sure, white workers might also have had problems confronting employers. However, the likelihood of different treatment due to workplace racism increased the chances of having confrontations with management. Both Mr. Rosey and his black co-workers demonstrated
some form of agency. Some chose silence whereas others chose actions more in keeping with popular notions of "resistance."

In the interviews individuals often repeated common aphorisms, which suggests some shared aspects of growing up black in Chatham. At one point during our interview, Ms. Tiles said "[i]f you were black stay back," within the context of knowing the assumed proper place of black people.\(^73\) In a separate interview I conducted with lifetime Chatham resident Mrs. W. Read, in which she discussed tokenism in employment in Chatham during the 1960s ("token cop, token fireman"), she qualified her statement by saying: "When you are white you're right," unknowingly invoking the spirit of Big Bill Broonzy 1950s blues song "Black, Brown and White":

This little song that I'm singing about,  
People, you know it's true  
If you're black and gotta work for a livin',  
This is what they will say to you,  
They says, "if you was white, should be all right,  
If you was brown, stick around,  
But as you's black, oh brother, get back, get back, get back.

In keeping with this theme, Ms. B. Metts' employment experiences provided a rather instance where "if you're black stay back" became literal and explicit. Ms. Metts worked at a local gas company for 20 years and claimed constant harassment by one of her supervisors.

I worked there for 20 odd years, when I worked there...there was one supervisor there and he always used to harass me all the time. I think he was prejudice. Um, so whenever there was something that everyone was doing wrong, I was the one that was pinned for it. ALWAYS. You know, you took too long with your break. Well, so did everyone else, and that went on all the time. I remember him pulling me in constantly and writing me up. My file was this thick because anything that went wrong...they seem to target me because I basically, I believe I was the only black at the service centre station. I would go to the union and the union would try to you know, say well, it's not really covered in the agreement that it's discrimination. I also worked with a man that would always work in the meter shop, that every time he saw me in the hall: "Get to the back of the bus." He'd always used to say that, "Well, get to the back of the bus, get to the back of the bus,"

\(^73\) Tiles, interview.
and he'd joke about he'd say it in front of a lot of people which made me very uncomfortable. I would just turn around and just say, "Why don't you just shut your mouth," type of thing, right? So then one day, his supervisor heard him say it so he called up head office and...HR came right over and set up a meeting and they gave him two days off with no pay, and ever since then the man was invisible to me. I never seen him in the hall, I'd ignore him and we never spoke after that.74

Due to company restructuring, B. Metts' place of employment was closed and she took a buyout. After two years, the company reopened, but because of union rules, she could not be rehired. What happened as a result, Ms. Metts attributed to unfair and prejudiced hiring practices:

So...from there they closed [company name] so they give me a buy out so, because it was 2 years that they closed it they couldn't take me back at [new company name]. If it would have been a year, they would have had to take me back. So it went 2 years, so, how convenient even though the other girls seemed to get jobs back at [new company name]. So that's that...then from there...it was pretty rough because I used that buy out and I was a single mom and I had my two sons, so I sat on the buy out for a year, I thought, well, I'll get a job, I'll get a job...well, I didn't get a job.75

After that experience Ms. Metts tried to secure a position with the 911 services at the Chatham-Kent police detachment. After having passed every test required, it was not until after the panel interview that Ms. Metts was informed, by mail, that she had not met the requirements of the position. She felt that this again was a sign of unfair practices:

So I did everything to fight the police department. I had to let it go because my dad said you're fighting a losing battle, it's a dead horse, sometimes things aren't fair, you're black, you gotta let it go. So then I went and worked at a call centre, two call centres...I hated it. I absolutely hated it. They expected you to do this and that, they talked to you like you were a kid. I quit that.76

When Ms. Metts transitioned to a new job as a court monitor at the Chatham courthouse, she thought she had finally found a position in an industry she had been drawn to for most of her adult life. She "absolutely loved it," and worked there for two years before the position was

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74 B. Metts, interview by Carmen Poole, Chatham, ON, June 17, 2010.
75 Metts, interview.
76 Metts, interview.
dissolved. She was offered a position in Court Services, but felt some of the requirements were too servile when she viewed them through the racialized lens she had developed over the course of her past employment experiences.

…you work for a few hours, you're not getting steady hours but you assist the superior court judges which means you bring them into the court room, and you tell everyone to rise and you sit there. You wear the whole garb and you get their books, and you go to the thing…that made me feel like a glorified servant. Being that I was black, white people might like doing that, I didn't really care for it. There's some that you felt very inferior to, because they would have you carry [their] books. Then one day, this old geezer, I don't even know his name and I was getting ready to leave for lunch and he's all, "Can you go down to my car and bring my lunch up for me?" Well that…I thought, alright, am I hearing this? I had to go down and bring his lunch out of his vehicle up to him. That didn't sit well with me. So anyway, I did that for awhile. I wasn't making enough hours so then I didn't work there.  

Ms. Metts admits that it was while working that she encountered the full impact of racial prejudice. It was also clear during our interview that her views were shaped by her father's advice, and were transformed into specific methods of survival that she subsequently passed on to her two sons.

I think I found most of the prejudice in the work world. I found the prejudice and discrimination come in later in life. I didn't really notice it [when she was younger]. It's funny, you don't really notice it until you get into the work part of it, and I don't know if it's because white people thought those were their positions and that blacks should not fill, you know what I’m saying?...They picked who they wanted, basically, even though you had the qualifications and the years of service in, I did notice that with [the gas company], trust me.

And when it came to job hunting:

I used to always put my name in [at City Hall], always put my name in, always put my name in. Never got one interview. So what I do now, I don't hand deliver resumes. I don't want them to notice that I'm black first, you understand what I'm saying? Because the concept is, like I said to [my son], don't drop them off, mail them, because the thing is, if you drop them off they could toss them, I'm not giving them that advantage, I want them to turn me down to my face.  

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77 Metts, interview.  
78 Metts, interview.  
79 Metts, interview.
In-Service:

Figure 34: Ruby Kersey, in service, 1930s. Permission to use this image granted by B. Milburn from her personal collection.
Working "in-service", as live-in domestics or as shift workers, black women, and some black men, had to balance responsibilities for their own households and those of the white homes within which they worked for their daily wage. The interviews suggest that the in-service experience was one that women shared with one another, sister-to-sister and mother to daughter. There was a clear distinction between the memories shared by women who worked in service themselves and the remembrances of the children and grandchildren of women who worked in service. For those women who worked in service, their recollections were matter of fact, and somewhat devoid of subjective impressions. They recounted where and for whom they worked, but did not go into detail as far as what the experience was like. For example, Ms. T. Symon, who was 95 years old when interviewed, suggested that there was a natural order of things and that the in-service experience was not altogether unpleasant, a job like any other:

Well I stayed around home, but then I'd babysit for people, for neighbours, and then I went out and done housework, see I'd be around 13…13, 14, years old and I started doing housework [after grade 8]. I did housework over in Ann Arbor [Michigan].

Laughing as she recalled the story, Ms. Symon told me that she was "deported back home." When asked why, Ms. Symon laughingly said, "I was kicked out, so then I come to Chatham and worked in Chatham housework." While in Ann Arbor, Ms. Symon lived in, "stayed right in the home," and stated that the experience "was nice, and the people were very very nice." Despite the years that had passed between her in-service work and the interview, Ms. Symon remembered the names of who she worked for stateside. One family was headed by a successful dentist, and another by a gentleman who worked for a tobacco company who was originally from the south. Ms. Symon stayed in service until she married her husband in the 1930s. Ms. Symon's

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80 T. Symon, interview by Carmen Poole, Chatham, ON, June 16, 2010.
81 Symon, interview.
82 Symon, interview.
83 Symon, interview.
matter-of-fact demeanor emerged when discussing the options black women in Chatham in the first half of the twentieth century:

That was about all women could do back in those days, do housework…Not too, some of them ventured out and got educated, I know there were school teachers, ladies who were school teachers, but ah, and they started moving on.84

Ms. Symon also worked in the factories "in season" and also worked at a city motel. When I asked what she did at the motel, Ms. Symon chuckled at my apparent naiveté and exclaimed "Clean rooms!!" as though I had not been paying adequate attention to the nature of her work history and how it interplayed with race. According to Ms. Symon, had I been following along closely, I should have guessed that her job at the motel would have been in cleaning and not front desk, or back office or clerical work. According to Ms. Symon, women who looked like her had few options, but should always remain grateful for the options they did have.

Memories of in-service work by mothers and grandmothers were told with a mixture of shame and respect. Discussing her maternal grandmother's work as a cook, Ms. S. Weams admits that, "we as kids used to say she worked for the white man cause she worked in a house for [whites]."85 While it may appear innocuous, it was clear that this statement was one of judgment; given the fact that she wanted to identify with her white peers more than her black peers, working for whites was viewed with contempt and distain. It was said mockingly rather than as a simple observation. In contrast, Ms. Tiles seems to celebrate her mother's fortitude and remained in awe of what her mother endured in order to take care of her family.

Oh she took in stuff. Yeah, she took in laundry, she took in washing, she, she told me this, she took in I don't know for who, who for, but took in laundry and washing and she, as a domestic, I think maybe before she was married, she was a domestic too, because I think she might have lived in and she'd do their meals and everything. They loved her cooking…they loved her cooking! You know, and they'd say "Geez [mother's name], what's in that pot?! That sure is good," and Momma said, "I'd tell them it was slop."

84Symon, interview.
85Weams, interview.
Because that's just the way she was. But she did what she had to do to help take care of the family. I mean she was older when she got married too, she was like 25, I don't remember her being a domestic, but I remember her telling me the stories, and she remembered the colour of her uniform at each house where she worked. I don't remember what it was, but she told me she had this colour at this house, or this colour at that house, and um, yeah, so she...Momma worked hard, she worked harder than I'll probably ever work in my life....I think she did a lot, domestic, and factory work, and but she wouldn't take no guff from anybody.\textsuperscript{86}

Unfortunately the reverence she held for her mother's work and dedication was tempered by a common childhood desire to fit in and be accepted. Given the size of Chatham overall, it was almost impossible not to interact with the families of employers. In Ms. Tiles case, she attended school with the children of one of the families her mother worked for.

The only thing I recall, I don't recall anything specific, I know a lot of people were, a lot of black people were domestics, I'm not sure if that was before I came along, but I remember her being a domestic for someone I went to school with, you know...And I knew that. I don't know what age I was, but I remember the family name, I know they lived near the McKeough school, and I know, I guess that was the hardest thing for Momma, the fact that I can cook your food and take care of your kids, but I can't sit next to you on the bus, or whatever. You know. But she did what she had to do to take care of her family, and she was taking in washing, ironing, she did a lot. Momma did a lot of stuff.\textsuperscript{87}

One can only imagine, from a child's perspective, how difficult it would be to attend school with the very children your mother fed and cleaned up after.

Ms. A. Ford offers a last example of the nuances of in-service work in her description of the impact her mother's in-service had on her life. The effect in this case was felt years after the fact when Ms. A. Ford was an adult and her mother had since passed away.

But that was her first job and then I believe when she went to Dresden she worked as a domestic for these people named [redacted] and it's a big ole house that's there….it's still there…and my mother—this happened a couple of years ago when I was at Uncle Tom's Cabin—well actually I met the woman, I didn't meet Mrs. [redacted], I met her daughter, and mom helped raise her, cause mom cooked and cleaned there, and she lived there, and [a friend] actually told me, introduced me to this woman, at a later date. But I remember her coming to the funeral home when mom died, and I really didn't know who she was,

\textsuperscript{86} Tiles, interview.
\textsuperscript{87} Tiles, interview.
she just said, "You know, your mom used to look after me." Like, I really didn't know. [This was the]daughter of the family. So anyway, but I do recall mom saying that she basically raised this kid, you know, she'd telling me stories about it but I had never met her. So she came from Toronto for mom's, to come to the funeral home. But then later, so that was that point. My brothers of course, knew who she was cause they're older [9 and 15 years older than Mrs. Ford]. So anyway, later on, at Uncle Tom's Cabin I was there, and I remember kinda seeing this woman thinking, "Who is that?" and like she looked familiar and it turned out to be her. And so [my friend] said to me, she grew up with her they're around the same age, and she said, you know you should ask if you can see in the house. Like the family still owns the house she would only come in the summer and stay there, and she said, "Your mother's room is the very same way it was when she left" like they thought that much of her that they didn't change her room. And it's still like that. She said, "You should ask and we can see, if you can go in and see it." So she took me over to meet this lady again, and she said "Oh yeah, you can come see it." And I never did do it. Cause I think it bothered me, I didn't want to see it. At first I was excited, I wanted to see it. But then, I think, yeah, I remember what mom told me about living there. And having to do all the work for those people and you know, even though they thought a lot of her, she still was like their little slave person that was doing all the cooking and she had to bake and look after the kid, you know…

Ms. Ford also remembered that her mother told her about having to package leftovers because the family she worked for would give leftover food to the less fortunate:

because people would come to the back door, cause this was during the depression when, ok, mom and dad, you know it's hard time anyway, they got married in '36. But she recalls beggars coming and they would feed them from the back door.

Ms. Ford struggled to explain why her initial excitement at seeing the room her beloved mother lived in while working for that family reverted to borderline disgust. The following summary speaks to the difficulties with coming to terms with the contradiction between knowing the family "loved" her mother, and understanding her mother's true place in that family's home:

I feel, they treated her…they thought they were treating her like you know one of the family, but it's the one in the family that does all the work. And Momma, I think she felt comfortable there and happy there, you know, it was a life, she probably had it better than some others but she was on her hands and knees and scrubbing floors and doing all the work.  

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88Ford, interview.
89Ford, interview.
Civil Rights, Black History and "Black Consciousness":

Blacks in Canada have fought to limit the impact of white racism in their day-to-day lives. For example, the Kent County Civil Rights League was formed in 1891 to challenge school segregation, a battle they won two years later. Similarly, a generation later in the middle of the 20th century, the National Unity Association (NUA) brought national attention to the racist segregation practice in Dresden and Chatham restaurants and service industries. Playing an integral part in Ontario's passing of the Fair Accommodation Practices Act, the NUA and its members demonstrate that there were organized, concerted and successful efforts by blacks in Canada who insisted on equality.

However, as Adrienne Shadd asserts in her article, "No 'Back Alley Clique': The Campaign to Desegregate Chatham's Public Schools 1891-1893," this history "has gone unrecorded and unrecognized in Black Canadian historiography." It is therefore no wonder why it has also escaped notice on a local or "community" level. And despite recent attempts to highlight the significance of the NUA's fight for fair accommodations in Canadian and black history, its absence from Canadian popular history provides yet another example of the marginalization of black lives and contributions within the broader scope of Canadian national, provincial, or local history. Given its marginality, it would be unfair to assume its history would be something popularly known or celebrated beyond those individuals who may have had the privilege of learning about these civil rights pioneers via other means.

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92 Shadd, "No 'Back Alley Clique': The Campaign to Desegregate Chatham's Public Schools, 1891-1893," np.
In contrast to the Canadian context, the relative visibility of the American Civil Rights movement was difficult to ignore. The reaction to and knowledge of the American Civil Rights movement among the interviewees who participated in this study could best be described as awareness void of investment. While most respondents indicated they were conscious of the racial tensions that led to the Civil Rights movement, the popularity of Martin Luther King, the notoriety of Malcolm X and the violence of the Detroit Riots that occurred in 1967, there was very little sense that it was something that impacted them as black Canadians. All of the interviewees had close family in the United States: when they voiced apprehension about the impact of racial strife and violence it was almost exclusively motivated by familial care and concern. Though some admitted that they did not remember much, they recalled enough to describe the middle of the twentieth century alternately as: "really a mess", "we heard about it", or as not being "a very pleasant time," and were quite happy to leave it at that.93

Mr. Read was born in 1944 and remembers the Detroit Riots, but his knowledge of it was limited to what he saw on the news. His discomfort was evident when he stated that "if [he] knew anything about it, hearsay-like, they don't talk to me about it, you'd hear them talk or you'd see it on TV" but when it came to hearing about it in school or the classroom: "Oh no. No, no, no, noooo, they didn't have that. No."94 Ms. Read, who would have been in her early 20s in the 1960s, visited Detroit every summer as a child to visit aunts and cousins; she admitted that she followed it on the news, but did not follow it closely. It appears, however, that she rejected the notion that the fate of American blacks was tied to that of black Canadians all while relating to their defiant spirit:

93 A. Ross, interview by Carmen Poole, Chatham, ON, June 15, 2010; O. Mayne, interview by Carmen Poole, Chatham, ON, June 15; Symon, interview.
94Bayn, interview.
Not like some people would [follow the news]. Now, we're Canadians. This is this country. That is that country. Getting in the back of the bus? I'd probably be in jail.95

Ms. Weams was born in 1960 and did not recall the Detroit Riots. However, she does remember a very real fear of the Ku Klux Klan:

KKK, sure remember them. Cause I remember being afraid of the KKK. Always knew that the KKK was in the States and I could remember being a little girl and being fearful of them coming to Canada. Always fearful of the KKK.96

There were some interesting contradictions in what Ms. Weams shared when discussing civil rights, black consciousness, and the way her father negotiated his blackness as a black man living in Chatham. She remembers hearing about the Black Panther Party through her father's interest in their movement.

I remember the Black Panthers. Definitely, just because of my father. I can remember it, I tell my husband, he was doing Black Power and I can remember us stopping the car and we were on our way somewhere and I can remember my father stopping the car, getting out and dancing in the middle of the road to James Brown and just everybody used to do the Black Power! Black Power! I remember that, I was just a little kid but...97

When I asked whether her parents were involved and particularly political when it came to the Black Power movement, Ms. Weams informed me that her father was quite interested, though "not really into it", and her mother had no interest whatsoever because she "was just…she was just a nice person."98 The contradiction appears when Ms. Weams describes her father as "bamboozled":

Just always we were raised that it was a white man's world and don't ever forget it. No my father would be stereotyped as bamboozled, kind of the, just like in the slave days where you see the black guys see the white guy, "Howya doing? Whatcha doing?" guy. My father is very much that and so all them white folks liked my dad.99

95Read, interview.
96Weams, interview.
97Weams, interview.
98Weams, interview.
99Weams, interview.
Given his interest in the Black Power movement, this was an interesting characterization. When I asked Ms. Weams if she thought her father was genuinely "bamboozled" or whether she thought it was simply a role he played. Her response:

That was a role he played, that he still plays. Yeah. He plays that role well. I remember it so well because always when he got in the house, or got in the car, he'll always say, "You gotta act like you got some sense around them white folks cause you know, they gonna talk, you know." So everything was always meticulous, us kids, were always meticulous, the grass was always, the driveway. My father, you know, yeah, it was just the neighbours, "Howya doing!", you know? Total…bamboozled as far as I'm concerned.\footnote{Weams, interview.}

It was clear that Ms. Weams acknowledged her father's role-playing as a "step-n-fetchit negro" as a charade and judged him for resorting to it.

In keeping with the general impression of the interviewees regarding the Detroit Riots and the Civil Rights movement, Mr. Kingly describes the simultaneity of distance and disconnect with the impact of relating to the struggles that blacks endured in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s:

I just remember that they just, they just went crazy, started burning and shootin'. That was '67, and I was just, I was finished school then, just finishing school and the Civil Rights were, we knew about it, but we didn't really understand because we didn't understand the treatment that blacks got in the states as opposed to the treatment we got here. We knew that, like, down there, in the states, like what I've seen and what I've gathered over the year, it was very harsh treatment like they were beat for no reason and we didn't...didn't get any of that here, so it wasn't, we sympathized with them, but it wasn't to the degree that you gotta do this...It's...it wasn't, I don't know, we understood that they were fighting for something, but to the degree that they were fighting, we didn't really grasp, at least I didn't...We had seen, we can see on TV how they were treating, and we didn't agree with it, how they were being treated, but that was just, that was stuff, because of the riots we could see, we could see why they were fighting, we could see it wasn't fair how they were being treated. Even now, when I see stuff on TV, when they go back and show em, show stuff, them hanging blacks and beating them, I get mad. I get mad. And I can't go out. I gotta stay home and cool off cause I'll go out and I'll have that anger in me towards white people, so I gotta stay home and cool off, and that's why I won't watch it sometimes, it makes me angry, and I just, and if I do see it, I stay home. I don't go out.\footnote{Kingly, interview.}
When questioned about how and whether the Civil Rights movement or black history in general was discussed in the home or covered at all in school, Mr. Kingly stated:

No, they didn't, we didn't, we didn't really, really discuss it. We just watched it and it was news and didn't go into depth as to why he [Martin Luther King] was doing it. We probably talked about when Kennedy got assassinated; we probably talked more about that then. We didn't [talk] about Martin Luther King and [the] Civil Rights movement…No [laughter], no, no, no, wasn't nothing. [In school], they talked about African, but they didn't, they said, "Here's Africa", it's a continent. They didn't go into the differences…nothing like this is where black people and stuff, they didn't go into any detail…”¹⁰²

There was an air of incredulity at the notion that black history would be taught in schools, evidenced by rather hearty laughter at the very idea. Mr. Craig recalls visits to his aunt's home as a child, and seeing pictures of Martin Luther King on his aunt's walls:

I'm trying to remember if it was after, I think it was before Martin Luther King passed and they had a picture of him up on the wall, and you just sort of wondered who this guy was, you know…I think we, well, probably for my age too [Mr. Craig was born in 1961], at the time because all that stuff happened when I was a kid…like I was 7 years old when that happened, so I think I was, we were separate from that, just because of probably where we did live, so I don't really recall a lot of those things, you recall kind of what you were maybe doing later on, like what I was doing, why didn't I know about it. It's just that we were probably shielded from it just because it wasn't something that affect us directly here, which we didn't think it did, but you didn't know all the stuff that was going on down south, you just knew, I ain't going south, that was pretty much it.¹⁰³

Ms. Tiles response was even more terse. Seventeen years old when the Riots took place, she had family in Detroit and she recalled the concern for their safety. They visited frequently but were always apprehensive when crossing the border:

I do recall the riots a bit, because we had family living there, my Dad's sister lived there so…I can just remember going there to visit and just not always being comfortable being in the city of Detroit because of the climate the…Before the riots even, yeah, before the riots, yeah yeah. Detroit, yeah, you had to be careful. You had to be careful. I remember my Dad saying, "Don't look at anybody, don't look at anybody, in anybody's car, cause you're going to be in trouble." But that was our mentality, that was what we were told. And even to this day, we still have that, my generation, I think, we still have that,

¹⁰²Kingly, interview.
¹⁰³Craig, interview.
what…stigma? Not stigma…discomfort, when we go over to the states. You have to remember, the only thing I recall, I don't recall anything specific about those events, but I was brought up in a household where my dad wouldn't watch anything black on TV."

Ms. Tiles was of the opinion that her knowledge of and participation in black-centric events and interest in black culture, media, or history was limited due to her parents' aversion to all things black.

I don't think that generation [her parents'] really thought that they didn't…how can I put it? It's like they separated themselves from the American experience. The Martin Luther King, to me, now, maybe I'm wrong, but year, my father and mum, they wouldn't have thought anything of it, one way or the other, because it was happening over there, it wasn't happening over here, so they just wouldn't think that, yeah. My Dad saw some Africans on TV he'd turn the channel. Yeah, so I think that lack of pride, it ran through the family.¹⁰⁴

This alternative experience of blackness permeated many of the interviews. There was an awareness of sorts, but one that was muted by political and social distance. There was no sense of duty. And there was no real notion that there ought to have been some form of obligation born out of shared racial background because the interviewees felt that their lived experiences were quite distinct and separate from those of American blacks.

Peter J. Paris, who lived in Halifax in the 1960s, writes in his essay entitled "The Spirituality of African Peoples in Canada and Beyond,"

[the spirit of black pride swept across the African continent and throughout the diaspora all the way to Nova Scotia. That trajectory was evidenced in the turmoil caused by that signal event in 1968 when Rocky Jones and an ad hoc group of young blacks invited the fiery Stokely Carmichael to speak in Halifax.]¹⁰⁵

The impact of the Civil Rights and the Black Power movements was clearly not the same for all blacks in Canada. The contrast is evident by comparing Paris' experience to those of the Ontario men who participated in the Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons in the 1960s. The three-

¹⁰⁴Tiles, interview.
day 112th Annual Grand Lodge Session Proceedings of The Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of the Province of Ontario, was opened by then Worthy Grand Master Charles A. Downes Grand Master's Address. In his address, Mr. Downes stated that on August 9th 1966 he had attended a banquet at the William Pitt Hotel in Chatham where a guest speaker from Michigan "left a message that foretold of the strife through civil disobedience that stems from lack of parental control of children." This was an allusion to the Detroit Riots, which had occurred between the 1966 meeting being reported and the August 1967 Grand Lodge session. On December 8th 1966, the Grand Master attended a "meeting in Toronto at the home of Mr. Creed." The Grand Master informs the attendees of the Annual Communication that it was at this home where "Stokely Carmichael-Black Power" was the "speaker of the evening." Grand Master Downes expressed his opinion on the matter:

Even then under a friendly and patronizing roof and surrounded by persons of liberal persuasion it was evident that he could be an emotionally mixed up and politically dangerous man.

In keeping with this more conservative view of black pride and its representatives, interviewee Ms. A. Ross, herself a member of the Order of the Eastern Star, confirmed the opposing perspectives of Chatham blacks and certain African American activists

…it was, they were burning and doing everything, and um, you had two elements I felt. You had those that were aggressive like the Rap Browns and those people, I suppose, and then you had the Jesse Jacksons and those people that they, just it was a lot of talk I think. And I remember the Lodge when we were in Philadelphia they took Jesse Jackson in, I didn't even get out of our room to go down to see him come cause I could care less, because he was only coming because of who he was, he wasn't going to add anything and you, you know, the caliber of some people that are there to help themselves, and I suppose they do some good, but they also do some not good things too.
These black Canadians did not experience the Civil Rights movement as American blacks because they did not see themselves as having lived through comparable disenfranchisement or racial violence. The impression left was that it was the news of the day, and the news did cross the border. But when it came to their racial identities, what African Americans were fighting against in the United States was presented as quite foreign to their experience in Chatham. In the absence of a shared or common memory, race in this particular instance was insufficient to establishing a deep connection to the African American experience. Where there was empathy, there was also a distance that went beyond that of geography and entered into the spaces where questions of identity reside.

**Conclusion:**

Is it possible to evaluate how discrimination shapes the identity formation of its victims? These interviews suggest an alternative reading to the not uncommon narrative that the black community provided such counterhegemonic value as to compensate for all of the negativity and tiresomeness of day-to-day racism. It is without a doubt that blacks in Chatham were bound by many and varied kinship ties. As well, at least on the East End of the city, there were individuals and families who were united by community ties that were spatially rather than racially defined. The presence of counterhegemonic spaces is certainly worth highlighting but it would be incorrect to assume that spaces that reflected positive images competed on an even playing field with spaces that did not. And though it should go without saying that there are negative side effects to living in world that is hostile to your presence, the historiography remains silent when it comes to suggesting that historical marginalization over generations has the potential to leave indelible scars.
Some have argued that despite "the hypothesis that ethnic identity protects against the stress of racism and discrimination," racism can in fact undermine the development of a positive ethnic identity.\textsuperscript{111} Others argue that living in a world that steadily reflects negative images of members of your racial group can cause an internalization of these negative feelings such that it would cause some distancing from the offending racialized group.\textsuperscript{112} Still others argue that exposure to racism and the adoption of internalized racism can even cause black people to "suppress their blackness," and, in a turn that is reminiscent of the nineteenth century black middle class predecessors, it is possible that certain individuals may begin to imitate the culture of the 'oppressor'-adopting values and preferences that are more consistent with White society and culture. The internalization is so complete that a person is likely to believe that anything associated with her/his ethnic culture is unattractive.\textsuperscript{113}

Without engaging in psychological studies, it is important to note that being able to determine how individuals cope with stressors they cannot control externally is impossible without some conjecture. What this study wishes to suggest is that counterhegemonic influences may not always look counterhegemonic in a manner that historians readily recognize. Rather than expressed within insulated institutions wherein positive representations of race are reinforced, the individuals I encountered suggest the potential for alternative methods of survival. Tolerance and endurance are just as intriguing, instructive, illuminating, and applicable to the lived experiences of black people in Canada as are the stories of exemplary individuals who should be viewed as exceptions rather than as representative. Some blacks resorted to stillness, accommodation, and complaisance as means of survival. And these methods should not, by any means, be constructed or understood as failure or as weakness.

\textsuperscript{112} Delgado, "Internalized Racism and Ethnic Identity," 53.
\textsuperscript{113} Ibid., 54.
Part of the failure of the historiography lies in its reticence to construct black Canadian compliance and accommodation as alternate modes of survival and adaptation, *by design*, in a world that was hostile to their very presence. Assimilation has often been constructed as a weakness. The considerable difference between the size of the African American population within the United States between 1860 and 1911 and the numbers of fugitive slaves and free blacks in Chatham during that same period, means that a different analysis is required when it comes to defining and understanding black identity, segregation, and assimilation. Assimilation or accommodation might well be constructed as a deliberate tactic used by blacks who represented not a just a minority, but an ultraminority\(^\text{114}\) who realized that they could not in fact, nor in numbers, combat racism, succeed as businessmen and businesswomen, feed their families, or change the hearts and minds of their white, and often hostile, neighbours. The ability to endure, to silence oneself, to suffer quietly, not as a signifier of a poorly formed character but rather as a manifestation that reflected the context from which these individuals emerged, is as compelling and illuminating as any other narrative that emerges from the history books.

Conclusion

For many Canadians, racism is an individual moral failing. The idea of widespread racist exclusion simply does not square with what they see as "the best country in the world"... Thus, Canadians' descriptions of racist experiences often appear unbelievable and are denied—explained away as either the results of unfortunate misunderstandings or the product of over-fertile imaginations and questionable motives on the part of those describing such experiences.¹

If Canada was the Promised Land, then Kent County may have certainly viewed itself as its welcoming centre. Much of Kent County's recent historical identity has centred on its progressive local character, which helped foster the creation of an enduring heritage of white generosity. Trends in social history and Ontario tourism shifted in the latter part of the twentieth century a shift which revealed African Canadian history as potentially lucrative at the municipal level, in turn, this prompted interest in Chatham's local black history. While individuals such as local historian and founder of the Chatham-Kent Black Historical Society, Buxton native Gwendolyn Robinson, had spent years insisting on the significance of the presence and contributions black history in the area, one could argue that over time a general disconnection, disassociation and disinterest settled into the area due to any number of reasons. This work has attempted to uncover a few potential reasons for this dislocation: a near complete local disregard for black contribution to the city since its inception, the philosophical and cultural break with a class of middle class blacks whose presence was both highly influential and temporary, the depression of an area made possible by white racism, and a racialized population whose race no longer supported a collective identity that would prove more salient than those of socioeconomic class or a strict adherence to notions self-determination.

The mid-nineteenth century was also considered an historical high point for blacks in Chatham. In keeping with the current popular narrative, despite particularly virulent white racism, the steadfastness of the community, its entrepreneurial and enterprising spirit, faith in God and education, and hard work, culminated in surprising wealth and historical firsts, which proved a triumphant contradiction to the white population's assumptions about the abilities of the members of the black community. These individuals were nurtured by a "socially constructed, historically rooted collective memory" that helped to "create [a] social solidarity in the present" that would not necessarily be available in subsequent generations.²

Post-Civil War American emancipation is commonly held as the central impetus for the shift in fortune for blacks in Chatham. As Roger Eyerman posits, it would become increasingly difficult to "define and unite the black 'community'" under a single issue in a post emancipation world.³ Black influencers in Chatham returned to the United States, both during the Civil War, in order to participate, and after the war, in order to reunite with family and pursue political and economic opportunities south of the border. According to the Black Abolitionist Papers:

The exodus drained away the leaders who gave purpose and energy to Canadian black communities. This was certainly the case at Elgin, and the Chatham black community lost its most able leaders with the departure of Mary Ann Shadd Cary, Isaac D. Shadd, Martin R. Delany, William H. Day, Amos Aray, James W. Purnell, Osborne P. Anderson and William H. Jones...Frequently leaderless and reduced in numbers and influence, Canadian blacks fell prey to the increased discrimination, neglect, and stereotyping that characterized race relations in late nineteenth-century Canada.⁴

It is most certain that the post-emancipation loss of Chatham's black leadership served as part catalyst for the overall decline of Chatham's black population. Regrettably, it would seem as though this particular chapter in Chatham's black history may have been overstated. One question that has yet to be addressed in the historical literature is the lack of information

² Eyerman, Cultural Trauma, 5.
³ Ibid., 14.
⁴ Ripley, The Black Abolitionist Papers, 42.
available concerning the actual experience of those blacks that lived in Chatham who could not be counted as a member of this particular elite. While the accomplishments of the black leadership of Chatham should not be diminished, a close reading of the sources bespeaks a particular brand of racism that was both insidious and pervasive. And while the black elite may have successfully held back the tide of white racism that precipitated the creation of a black ghetto in Chatham, it is not at all unreasonable to assume that these processes had been well underway, negatively impacting the lives of those blacks who were not economically privileged, scholastically gifted, or politically favoured. There is a great silence in this history, one that I would not want to contribute to. I am in utter agreement with Barrington Walker when he charges that certain works of African Canadian history:

...fail to adequately deal with the reality of White supremacy and class and gender inequalities that profoundly affected the lives of Blacks once they arrived in Canada West...they err in universalizing the experiences of a highly successful petty Black bourgeoisie while ignoring the far more representative struggles of those Black men and women who toiled at the margins of the capitalist wage economy alongside the White working class with little more to leverage than what they had during the days of slavery: their bodies.  

The problem with the history of blacks in Chatham is the historiography that suggests that it ended at the turn of the century and the significance of blacks in the area diminished almost instantaneously. For example, though the Prince Hall Lodge in Chatham survived well into the twentieth and twenty-first century, its influence was never as great as it once was, partly because it became increasingly evident that respectability would not actually offset the significance of racist discrimination in the city.

As Timothy Stanley asserts in this chapter's opening quote, racism in Canada is fraught with denials. It would seem that even within the oral testimony collected here, racism is a profoundly Canadian inconvenience: it is deeply impolite to express racists beliefs inasmuch as it

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5 Barrington Walker, HA Tanser, footnote 2, page 64.
is impolite to complain about their expression. The generational fallout of racism remains undertheorized at least where local black histories are concerned, I would argue this is partially due to the empathetic desire of a certain generation of blacks to simply "let sleeping dogs lie."6

By reassessing census data, I hoped to challenge certain demographic misconceptions that have shaped African-Canadian historical scholarship, such as the presumed number of black settlers (whether as free blacks or escaped slaves) to arrive in Chatham, and the estimated number of blacks believed to have returned to the United States after the abolition of slavery.

Looking beyond composition of non-settlement black life in Chatham, I have also endeavoured to move beyond the merely (and at times crudely) demographic focus to begin asking, "What was it like?" from a perspective that assumes that the answer matters to understanding and honouring the lived experience of blacks in this country. Being called a nigger once is awful, but we so rarely have the words or wherewithal to discover what it is like to be called nigger every day, while being one of five people who look like you in a world where fighting back has the potential to do more harm than good. Routine abuses are sanitized by virtue of their very ordinarness and cannot help but determine how an individual interacts the world around them. It is not enough to list the instances of offence. We spent so much time trying to prove the ways in which we were not victims that we forgot the fact that oftentimes we were. I hold that it is a worthwhile undertaking to investigate the actual impact(s) of a life spent shadowboxing the ubiquitous and altogether randomness of discrimination.

6 This sentiment was shared informally by a number of potential interviewees. This view took several forms such as "it's in the past, leave it there," "why do you want to bring all that back up," or the surprisingly common and reminiscent "we had it easier here, so why would we complain." Reading into "let sleeping dogs lie" provides a simultaneous intimation that a) things did happen b) we should try to forget about them because they don't matter anymore. I view this too as an important counterhegemonic coping mechanism and/or denial survival tactic.
Appendices

Appendix 1: Prince Hall Masonry: Titles and Committees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lodge Titles</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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Notes:
- Prince Hall Masonry refers to the organization that was active during the period indicated.
- Membership counts are approximate and may not reflect the actual numbers.
- Data is incomplete for some years, indicating a lack of recorded information.

Appendix 2: Prince Hall Masonry: Lodge Membership Counts by City

- Data includes membership counts for various lodges across different cities.
- Specific lodges mentioned include: Mt. Olive, Victoria, Mt. Moriah, etc.
- The table includes membership counts by year, reflecting the growth or decline in membership over time.

This data is historical and provides insights into the evolution of Masonic lodges and their membership trends over several decades.
Letter of Introduction:

Carmen Poole  
Theory and Policy Studies in Education  
Ontario Studies in Education/University of Toronto (OISE/UT)

Dear (Potential Participant):

I would like to welcome you to participate in my study concerning the lives and historical experiences of African-Canadians living in Chatham, Ontario. This study, supervised by Dr. Cecilia Morgan as part of my Doctoral studies in the History of Education at OISE/UT, intends to uncover and highlight black experiences in Chatham during the early to middle parts of the 20th century.

I invite you to participate in this study. I plan to conduct a semi-structured interview at a location of your choosing, the details of which are included in the Letter of Informed Consent.

I look forward to your response, and should you have any questions regarding the study, or the Letter of Informed Consent (provided herein), please do not hesitate to call me at 416-688-7261 or 519-351-0644, or email me at carmen.poole@gmail.com

I do hope you take this opportunity to contribute to this as yet unwritten chapter in Canadian history.

Sincerely,

Carmen Poole
INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

TITLE OF STUDY:

Voices Between and Beyond the Margins: The African-Canadian Settlement Experience and Historical Legacy in Chatham, Ontario, 1850-1980

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Carmen Poole, a doctoral student from the History of Education program (Theory and Policy in Education Department) of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education/University of Toronto (OISE/UT). This research will be conducted under the supervision of Dr. Cecilia Morgan from the Department of Theory and Policy Studies (OISE/UT).

The purpose of this study is to investigate the history of African-Canadians living in Chatham, Ontario from 1830-1980. The semi-structured interview you are asked to participate in will take approximately two hours, depending on your willingness, availability, and consent. Participation is strictly voluntary. These face-to-face interviews will be conducted at a location chosen by you, at your convenience and will be recorded and transcribed for use in a doctoral level dissertation and may also be used in future publications and presentations. The goal of the interview is to record your social, community, family, employment and educational experiences in Chatham, Ontario. You will not be compelled to answer questions you choose not to answer and the researcher ensures no judgments will be made about your responses. You will also have the right to request confidentiality and anonymity. Should you request anonymity, a pseudonym will be assigned and no personally identifiable information will be included in subsequent research.

In order to participate in this study, you must meet the following criteria. You must be an individual of African decent who lives or has lived in Chatham, Ontario for at least 10 years. You may have been born and raised in Chatham, moved to Chatham from elsewhere and continue to live in the city, raised your family in Chatham. As well, the year of your birth must be prior to 1980.

With your permission, the interview will be audio taped. Your consent will be required in order to tape record and transcribe your interview. In order to ensure that your ideas have been accurately represented, you will be sent a transcript of your interview by email or by regular mail within one month so that you may clarify or correct any information recorded during your interview. You have the right to withdraw from the research project at any time without prejudice.

There are no potential risks to participation in this study; however, the potential benefits to the community and society could be considerable. This interview will contribute to local historical knowledge on a historically underrepresented population. It will also contribute to the existing
history and understanding of the African-Canadian experience in Ontario during the early and mid-twentieth century. There will not be any compensation offered for your participation.

The information collected from the interviews will at all times be kept in strict confidence and stored in a secure location. A locked cabinet will be used for all raw data collected (pictures, documents, transcripts, digital recordings), and all computer-based information will be password protected. Only my advisor, Dr. Cecilia Morgan, and myself will have access to the locked cabinet and password-protected information. If you choose to remain anonymous, all stored data will be numerically coded and will not be attributable to you personally.

Materials from the project will be collected and donated to an as yet undetermined local archive in an effort to contribute to the overall historical legacy of the black population in Chatham. All information will be reported in accord with your wishes for anonymity.

If you have any questions related to your rights as a participant in this study or if you have any complaints or concerns about how you have been treated as a research participant, please, contact the Office of Research Ethics at 416-946-3273 or ethics.review@utoronto.ca. If you agree to participate, please sign the letter below and return it to me in the envelope provided. Thank you in advance for your participation.

Carmen Poole
Doctoral Candidate
Theory and Policy Studies in Education
Education OISE/University of Toronto
252 Bloor Street West, 6th Floor
Toronto, Ontario M5S 1V6
Telephone: 416-688-7261
Email: carmen.poole@utoronto.ca

Dr. Cecilia Morgan
Associate Professor
Theory and Policy Studies in Education
OISE/University of Toronto
252 Bloor Street West, 6th Floor
Toronto, Ontario M5S 1V6
Telephone: 416-978-1209
Email: cecilia.morgan@utoronto.ca

By signing below, you are indicating your willingness to participate in this study, that you have received a copy of this letter and that you are fully aware of the conditions outlined above:

Name: _________________________________ Date: ____________________

Signed: ________________________________
Please initial if:

i) you would like an email summary of the study upon completion: ____________

ii) you agree to have the interview audio taped: ______________

iii) you agree to be identified by name: ______________

iv) for participants who agree to be identified, you agree to be photographed: __________

v) you agree to the donation of the interview audio tapes and transcripts, and photographs to a local archive:

vi) if you would like a summary of the results of this study (results will be emailed to you after the completion of the study): __________

PLEASE KEEP A COPY OF THIS LETTER FOR YOUR RECORDS
Interview Questions:

1) Full Name, date and place of your birth.
2) ADDED: HOW LONG HAVE YOU LIVED IN CHATHAM
3) Parents’ names, date and place of birth (if known).
4) Parents’ occupation.
5) Your education and occupation, marriage, children.
6) What was your childhood like (describe family home, neighbourhood)?
7) Siblings’ names, dates and places of birth (if known).
8) Siblings’ occupations (if known).
9) Do you remember your grandparents?
10) Did they live in Chatham?
11) What was their highest level of education achieved?
12) What school(s) did you attend
13) What was school (grade school, middle school, high school) like for you?
14) Favourite teachers? Subjects? Why?
15) Where did you and your family spend your summer holidays?
16) Did your family travel for vacations?
17) How did your family celebrate the holidays (Christmas, Thanksgiving, Easter, etc.)?
18) What were some of your family traditions?
19) Did any member of your family belong to a community or fraternal organization? If so, which ones?
20) What world events do you recall from your childhood?
21) What was living in Chatham like as a teenager?
22) Did you attend post-secondary school? If so, which one and for what degree? If not, why not?
23) Did you serve in the military? If so, what was that like?
24) Did you know anyone who served in the military?
25) What was your first job? Did you like/dislike it? Why?
26) How many children do you have?
27) Children’s names, date and place of birth.
28) Children’s occupations.
29) What was raising your child(ren) in Chatham like?
30) What schools did your children go to?
31) What were your children’s educational experiences like?
32) Do you know where your family name comes from?
33) Do you have family in the United States?
34) Did you or do you travel to the U.S. frequently?
35) If so, for what purpose?
36) Do you have any recollections about the Civil Rights movement or the Detroit Riots?
37) What is your most cherished family tradition?
38) Did you experience any challenges living in, growing up in, or raising your children in this area?
39) What do you know about Chatham’s black history?
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