

Historic site commemorates anti-slavery link

The estate of Josiah Henson near Dresden, Ontario, comprising six heritage buildings and two cemeteries, has been designated as an historic site. Mr. Henson is generally considered to be the inspiration for the famous anti-slavery book *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

After escaping from slavery in 1830, Mr. Henson made numerous trips on the Underground Railroad leading fugitive slaves to Canada. He and a group of abolitionists

established a vocational school known as the British-American Institute for the escaped slaves.

An advisory committee involving the black community and members of Mr. Henson's family will be established in support of the project which will be administered by the corporation of Kent county. The Canadian government is contributing financially towards the project.

Early Canadian lighthouses featured on stamps

Canada Post issued a series of four 32-cent stamps on September 21, that reflect the major role lighthouses played in maintaining Canada's waterways open to navigation long before Confederation.

"The stamps feature the oldest lighthouses along the east and west coasts, the St. Lawrence River and the Great Lakes," said former Minister responsible for Canada Post Corp. André Ouellet. "Those lighthouses ensured safe journeys through fog, darkness and uncertain waters along our rocky shores, thereby allowing use of waterways which were vital to Canada's early development and survival," he added.

Toronto artist Dennis Noble provided paintings of the four lighthouses as they may have looked when they were first built, to illustrate the stamps. The type design was created by Toronto art director Ken Rodmell.

One stamp features the first lighthouse in Nova Scotia, built between 1731 and 1734. It stood on the harbour of the Louisbourg fortress on Cape Breton Island. Badly damaged during a British naval bombardment in 1758, it eventually fell into ruin.

The lighthouse at Ile Verte was built in 1809 on the shore of the St. Lawrence River opposite the mouth of the Saguenay River, where it still stands today.

Completed in 1808 on Toronto Island, Gibraltar Point is the oldest existing lighthouse in the Great Lakes Canadian system. It is preserved as a historic site by the city of Toronto.

Fisgard lighthouse, constructed between 1858 and 1860 at the entrance to Esquimalt Harbour on Vancouver Island, inaugurated navigation aids on the Pacific coast. The brick tower is still in service and is maintained as a historic site by Parks Canada.



First secret ballot for the blind

The September 1984 election introduced the arrival of the secret ballot for people who are visually-impaired.

A new system was implemented at all polling stations to allow blind people to slip their ballots into a cardboard folder with holes over the spaces next to each candidate's name. With the ballot inside the template, the polling booth attendant explained the order of the candidates and the blind person could feel the appropriate hole and mark the ballot.

In the past, blind voters were accompanied into the polling booth with a friend or other escort. This meant that they had to prove they were blind and the person accompanying them had to sign a sworn statement of confidentiality.

Bill Brinkers, director of the Canadian National Institute for the Blind says the system was developed as a result "of the frustration many blind people felt when it came to casting their ballots".

"It didn't really matter whether the escort kept his oath of secrecy. The very thought of having another person know was very degrading," he said.

The old system is still available to blind voters who prefer it.

Swan River Valley honoured

A plaque was unveiled on September 30 at Swan River to commemorate the diversity of peoples who have inhabited the Swan River Valley since the close of the last ice age.

The plaque unveiling ceremony was sponsored by the Historic Sites Advisory Board of Manitoba, in conjunction with the Swan Valley Historical Society.

At the ceremony, Manitoba's Culture, Heritage and Recreation Minister Eugene Kostyra said that "over the last 8 000 to 10 000 years several different populations entered the valley and availed themselves of the local abundance of game, fish and plant resources. Virtually the entire cultural history of the north-central Great Plains region of North America is represented in the valley".

The cultural progression of the region has been reconstructed by the Historic Resources Branch of Culture, Heritage and Recreation that has been responsible for several archaeological studies in the area. "This work has been done, not only by professionals, but by many amateurs and interested local people, whose input was crucial to the story as we presently know it," said Mr. Kostyra.