

The Negro In Ontario In The Nineteenth Century

The story of the Negro in Ontario begins with the earliest British settlement in the province. A few of the Loyalists brought Negro slaves with them into exile. The bondage and oppression of those early years was illustrated in a remarkable Exhibition of Ontario Negro history, sponsored

ed by the Toronto Negro Business and Professional Men Association at the Toronto public Library in November. I'm on my way to Canada, That cold and dreary land; The dire effects of slavery I can no longer stand...

Farewell, old master, Don't come after me, I'm on my way to Canada Where colored men are free.

—Fugitive Slave Song. Among the items on exhibit was an advertisement in Ontario's first newspaper the Gazette offering a Negro wo-

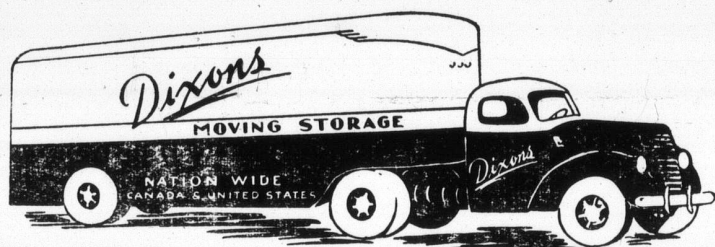
man and her son for sale at \$200 and \$150 respectively, a slave ring from a tree at Amherstburg, a letter from a Toronto runaway slave who had reached freedom in Schenectady. However, for the children of these slaves Ontario offered hope; in 1793 the first parliament of Upper Canada passed a law forbidding the importation of slaves, and automatically freeing the children of slaves when they reached the age of twenty-five. Thus slavery in Ontario lasted for only one generation.

After the War of 1812 in which Ontario's Negroes fought gallantly, the small Negro community was steadily increased by the arrival of runaway slaves from the Southern States. As early as 1827, the British Government refused to agree to American demands that such fugitives be returned. "Every man is free who reaches British ground." As the years went by, more and more slaves

found freedom by following the Underground Railway to Ontario. By 1851 there were more than 35,000 coloured people in the province, out of a total population of 952,000. Many of these lived in the south-western part of the province, with thriving communities at Buxton, Dresden, and in the Chatham and Windsor areas.

★ ★ The Toronto exhibition showed not only the history of the Negro in Ontario in the nineteenth century, but also something of his relations with his white neighbor. There were examples of early discrimination and bigotry, as well as evidence of cooperation and mutual respect. On the one hand there is the report of a public meeting in Chatham in 1850 urging Negro segregation; on the other the Mayor of Toronto in 1843 forbade a circus from performing Negro songs, "to save the feelings of the gentlemen of colour."

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Rights Leaders In Special Meetings

Top-level Negro leadership met in New York Tuesday night at the Hotel Carlyle. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., flew here from Washington after his conference with President Lyndon Johnson. The session continued in Washington on Wednesday in an expanded form when the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights convened.

Surprise participant in the Washington conference was George Meany, president of the AFL-CIO. The presence of labor support was seen as a possible dramatic breakthrough

ugh on the civil rights issue.

Besides Dr. King, others attending both New York and Washington meetings were Whitney M. Young, Jr., executive director of the National Urban League; Roy Wilkins, executive secretary of the National Urban League; James Farmer, director of the Congress of Racial Equality; Dorothy Height, National Council of Negro Women; and James Forman, SNIG. Nelson Jackson of the National Urban League represented Mr. Young at the Washington meeting.

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