

Other Notables

By Erin Brubacher for Heritage Mississauga

The most complete list of black people in our community is by far the census data from 1851, 1861, 1871 and 1881. Beyond that it is difficult to discern who was black, or part black, from old records unless it is explicitly stated. There are a few other families worthy of mention such as the Workman's who ran a farm on rented land in Port Credit. They were present on every census from 1851 until 1881. On the 1861 census it states they were married in 1820. There was little information on them beyond the census data. There was one reference to a Hanna Workman who died on 5 March 1885, aged 71 years, born in Canada died of Chronic Diarrhoea in Toronto.¹ This is possibly her, but there are no other records to prove it.

Another family are the Stewarts. They were listed on the 1861 and 1871 censuses as living in Caledon in Northern Peel. George Stewart was married to a white woman named Jane, and they had three children. In January 1871, the census data shows that they lost one son, George to a cold and fever. This was a sad reality for many families, and a hard hit in the middle of the winter. The data also shows that they were living on the side of the road in a shanty, however they had 2 milk cows, 1 sheep and 3 pig, so they could not have been completely destitute.² Perkins Bull also has a reference in his family notes, of a prominent settler living in Caledon by the name of Charles Stewart (or Steuart), living in Charleston.³ It is unclear if they were related, as Charles appears no where in any census data.

There is a mention of Rev. James Magrath having a black servant boy named Alick in Mrs. Jameson's 1838 book "Winter Studies and Summer Rambles".⁴ It is likely that most prominent families had black servants in the nineteenth century, however little record of them exists.

The Provincial Freeman, a newspaper run by early black settlers and mentioned previously had a few references to the Peel region, which suggests that there were many more black people here than realized. On April 22nd, 1854 a "Moses from Albion (Peel County) wrote an editorial, complimenting the Freeman, and

¹ Ontario Death Registration, County of Peel, Division of Toronto Township, source <www.ancestry.com> Accessed at the Mississauga Library, Central Branch.

² Government of Canada, 1871 census, Peel Region: Caledon, Division 4, pg. 4. Records reviewed at the Central Library, Mississauga, Ontario.

³ William Perkins Bull, "Research notes on Charleston" Correspondance from the William Perkins Bull Historical Series, circa 1930's. Provided by Brain Gilchrist at The Region of Peel Archives, Brampton, Ontario.

⁴ Mrs. Jameson, "Winter Studies and Summer Rambles" (London: Saunder and Otley, 1838) 308.

pledging to send at least 10 more subscriptions.⁵ On March 24th 1855 a local agent for Brampton appears, Dr. Jesse Burke, which means that the paper was widely distributed here.⁶ He was authorized to receive subscriptions and give receipts. There was a list of about 10 other towns in Southern Ontario which had local agents, including St.Catherines, Chatham and Toronto, all with large black populations. No more could be found on Jesse Burke, he did not seem to appear on any censuses. Finally, Mary Anne Shadd Cary's sister, Emmyanne lived in Caledon in the year 1856, a letter from their correspondence survives (appendix two).⁷ In it, Emmyanne describes the place, her hosts and expresses excitement at her new teaching post in the town. She does not describe any racism or animosity towards her from the towns people, indeed she describes them as generally friendly. It is possibly that Mary Anne visited her sister while she lived there.

There are many more families and individuals such as the Jacksons, the Spencers, the Thomas', John Cannon, John Minsky, the Bells and others.

⁵ The Provincial Freeman (Toronto), 22 April 1854: 2.

⁶ The Provincial Freeman (Toronto), 24 March 1855: 1.

⁷ Obtained from the Region of Peel Archives, Brampton, Ontario.