

IT STARTED WITH A DREAM:
THE AMHERSTBURG
FREEDOM MUSEUM

**ROUTES OF THE
UNDERGROUND
RAILROAD
1850 - 1865**
Compiled from "The Underground Railroad from
Slavery to Freedom" by Wilbur H. Siebert.
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OUR HISTORY

- Founded by Betty and Melvin "Mac" Simpson, the Museum was officially incorporated in 1975.
- It was their vision to promote the rich heritage of African Canadians, many of whose ancestors had escaped enslavement in the United States.



An illustration showing a group of people, including men, women, and children, carrying large bundles on their heads and backs. They are walking in a line, suggesting a journey or migration. The style is a dark, woodcut-style engraving.

OUR MISSION

A historical map of the United States showing the routes of the Underground Railroad. The map is titled "ROUTES OF THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD 1850 - 1865" and is compiled from "The Underground Railroad from Slavery to Freedom" by Wilbur H. Siebert. It shows various states including Wisconsin, Illinois, Ohio, Kentucky, Tennessee, and North Carolina. The map includes a legend and a scale bar.

We are a community-based, non-profit museum that tells the story of African Canadians' history and contributions by preserving and presenting artifacts that educate and inspire.



OUR HISTORY

- Founded in 1975 The Amherstburg Freedom Museum, previously known as 'The North Black Historical Museum'.
- Amherstburg meant freedom, for many Freedom Seekers escaping enslavement and persecutive laws in the United States.
- The museum complex includes, the Nazrey A.M.E. Church - national historic site and stop on the Underground Railroad, and the Taylor Log Cabin.



WHAT IS OUR TRUE VALUE AND ROLE?

« The museum was created to *'enlighten the people of Canada and tourists regarding (Black) history and participation in the growth of this great country of ours* »

» Melvin Simpson

« It seemed to Melvin Simpson that social, economic and educational problems could be addressed more effectively by a community with a greater self-awareness and a pride in being Black ».

ROUTES OF THE
UNDERGROUND
RAILROAD
1850 - 1865

Compiled from "The Underground Railroad from Slavery to Freedom" by William H. Siebert. Copyright, 1968, by The Macmillan Company.

COMMUNITY EFFORT



Founding Board directors and Community supporters:
Left to Right Paul Hertel, Anita Travis, Karl Kersey, Peter Morgan, Mac
Simpson, Paul White, Henry White, Andrea Moore, Lyle Browning,
someone that I'm not sure who it is & Frieda Steele

- 1979 a sod turning ceremony was held to initiate the construction of the Museum
- Mayor Garnet Fox, Dr. Daniel Hill, Philip Alexander, Henry White, and the Honourable Eugene Whelan joined Mac in this ceremony photo
- After 17 years, Mac's dream materialized with the opening of the North American Black Historical Museum





Opening Day
September 20th, 1975

• 500 guests attended opening day at the Museum on September 20, 1981



North American Black
Historical Museum, Inc.
OFFICIAL OPENING DAY
September 20, 1981
277 King Street
Amherstburg, Ontario

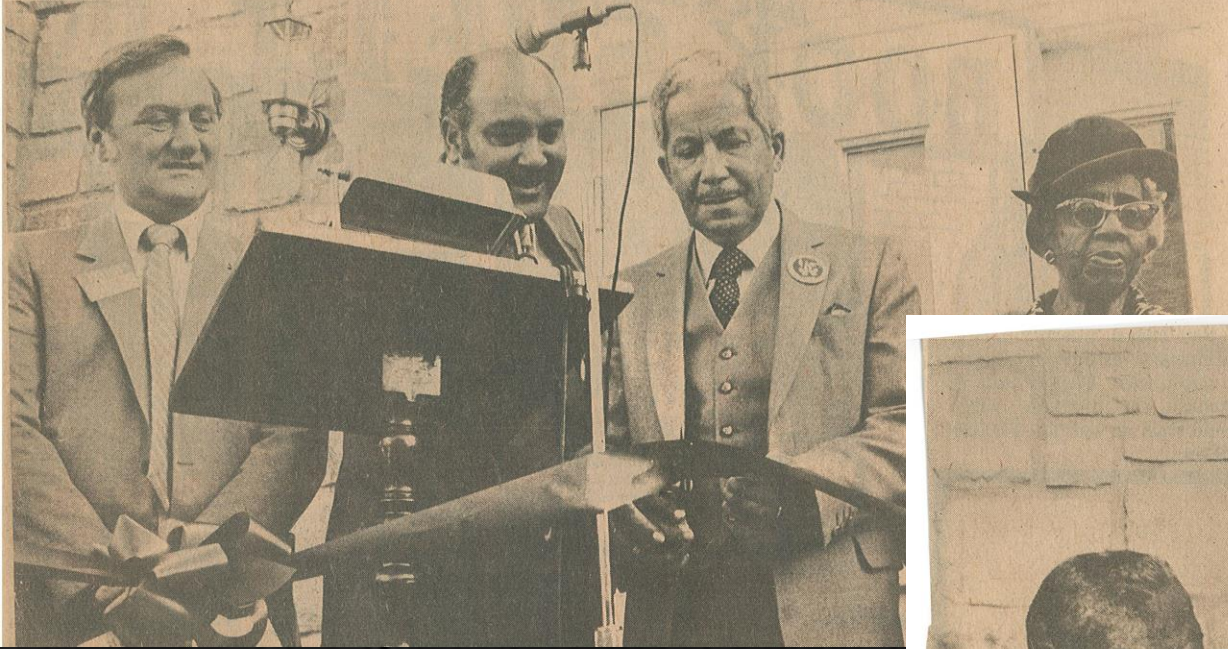


A twenty year dream comes true for the Black Community





A big day for Amherstburg!



-In attendance were Amherstburg Mayor Garnet Fox, Essex-Windsor MP Eugene Whelan and Essex-South MPP Remo Mancini who paid tribute to Mac's determination to make this dream a reality

- Also in attendance was historian and former President of the Ontario Black History Society, Dr. Dan Hill

- He called the museum 'the largest, most significant black museum in this country.'



Mac shared his feelings about the day in a *Windsor Star* article from September 21, 1981, which said, "I feel wonderful, it's a day of thanksgiving ... I wanted this museum to be a monument to the God-fearing people who came **here from slavery and**


built churches, houses and business and passed on and were forgotten. They will live on in this museum."



- **George McCurdy** who was, at the time, director of the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission gave the keynote address

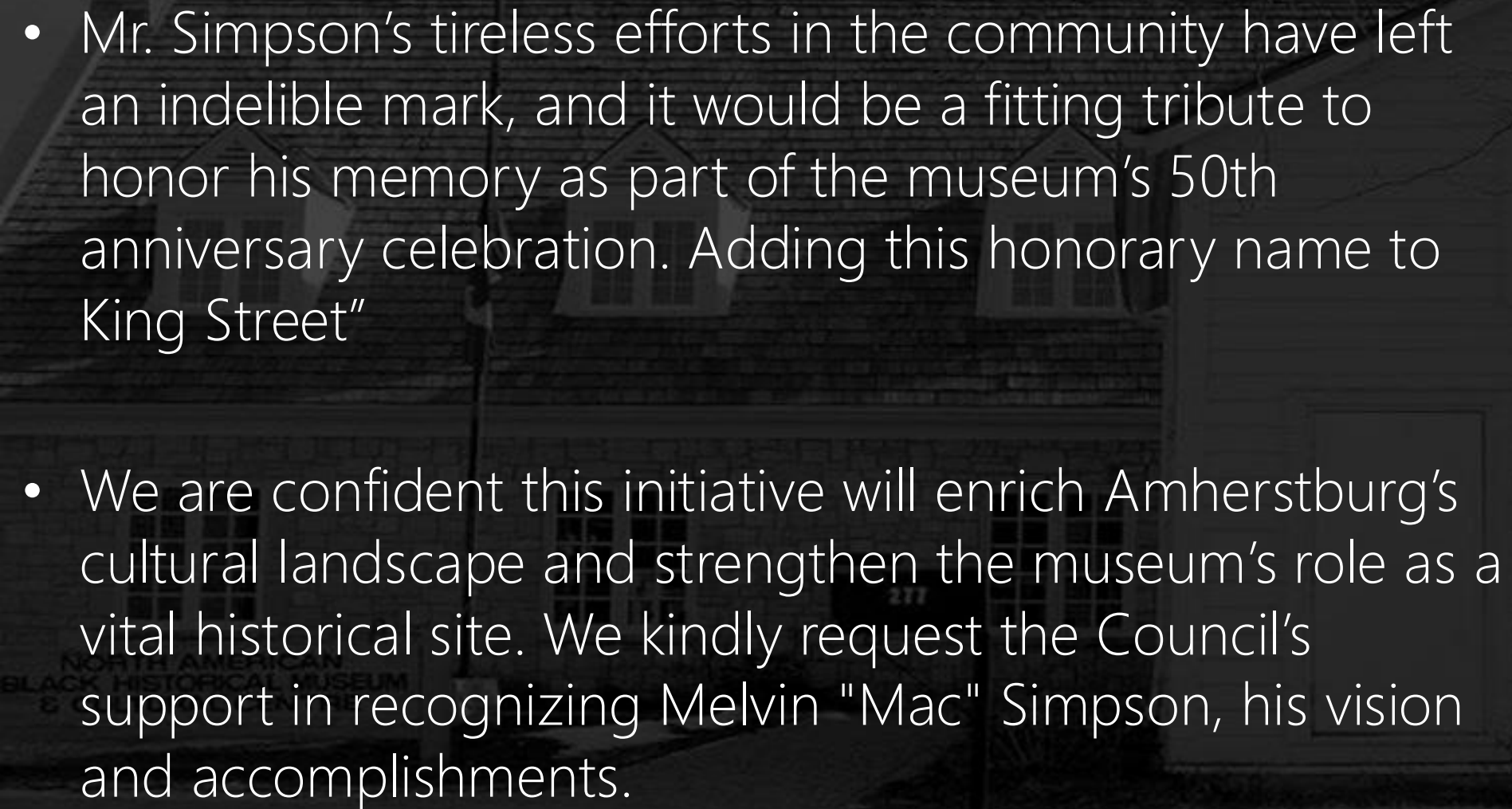
- McCurdy said, "The North American Black Historical Museum will inevitably attract scholars, students, editors, publishers and people from many walks of life interested in black history and genealogy – particularly young people in search of their identities."

- In 2015, the North American Black Historical Museum celebrated its 40th anniversary, and changed its name to the Amherstburg Freedom Museum, to emphasize its connection to people seeking freedom.
- In addition to sharing Amherstburg's stories of the Underground Railroad, and the compassion and solidarity it took to make this network possible, the Amherstburg Freedom museum collects, protects, interprets, researches, educates and exhibits a collection of artifacts of historical and cultural value.



Proposed Renaming of King Street

- As we approach the 50th anniversary of the Amherstburg Freedom Museum on *September 20th, 2025*, we are excited to celebrate this milestone and reflect on the important contributions the museum has made in preserving African Canadian history and culture.
- In recognition of this momentous occasion, we are reaching out to propose this initiative that we believe will further enhance the visibility of the museum and honor the legacy of its founder, Melvin "Mac" Simpson.
- In honor of our founder, Melvin "Mac" Simpson, whose vision and leadership established the Amherstburg Freedom Museum, we respectfully propose renaming a portion of King Street as "Mac Simpson Way."

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- Mr. Simpson's tireless efforts in the community have left an indelible mark, and it would be a fitting tribute to honor his memory as part of the museum's 50th anniversary celebration. Adding this honorary name to King Street"
 - We are confident this initiative will enrich Amherstburg's cultural landscape and strengthen the museum's role as a vital historical site. We kindly request the Council's support in recognizing Melvin "Mac" Simpson, his vision and accomplishments.

TO LEARN MORE HERE:

- Social Media

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A M H E R S T B U R G
F R E E D O M M U S E U M

- To view the monthly Family History Series, monthly Black History Series Presentations and Talking Drum newsletter, please visit our website amherstburgfreedom.org



A M H E R S T B U R G
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THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT
WE LOOK FORWARD TO YOUR VISIT!