

6th Annual Grey County Black History Event

Broken Shackles – Future Links

April 28, 2007
Durham Arena and Community Centre

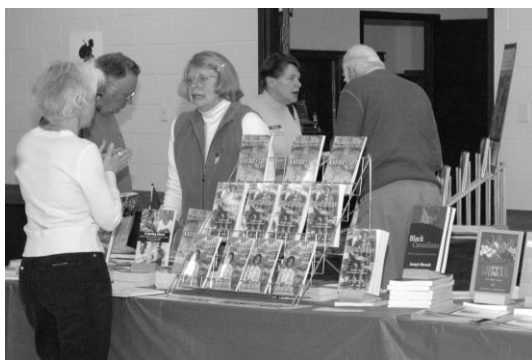
Amelia Ferguson

A foggy, cool morning turned into a beautiful day at the 6th Annual Grey County Black History Event. Participants, vendors, and presenters from all parts of the province and North America congregated at the Durham Arena and Community Centre.



Participants of the Grey County Black History Event

Before the presentations started, participants had the opportunity to browse the many tables at the Marketplace. This year's vendors included Natural Heritage Press, the Bruce & Grey Branch of the Ontario Genealogical Society, the Grey County Archives, Niagara Bound Tours, Joyce Pettigrew, Aberdeen Digital, the 145th Emancipation Celebration Festival, Norma Blacke-Bourdeau, the Cole family, Kathleen James, and Heritage Pathways.



Prospective clients at the Natural Heritage Press table



Event emcee Art Harvey

Preceding the official presentations, Art Harvey, Chair of the Bruce & Grey Branch of the Ontario Genealogical Society, and event emcee, introduced Kevin Eccles. As Mayor of West Grey, Mayor Eccles brought greetings on behalf of the local Municipality as well as the County of Grey. As always, Art was charismatic and offered the odd sly joke.

The first presenter of the morning was Peter Meyler. Noted author of stories pertaining to Ontario Black History, Peter spoke to the topic of John “Daddy” Hall. As Hall is the focus of Peter’s next book, he was well versed on the subject. Due to his prior editing of the book *Broken Shackles*, Peter was able to link the stories of James Henson with those of John Hall. He then went on to relate not only the research he had uncovered regarding Hall’s life in the southern States and his travels to the Owen Sound area, but also the ways in which the research was performed.



Peter Meyler



Kathleen Szakall

The next speaker, Kathleen Szakall, taught participants about genealogical research. Kathleen, a member of the Bruce & Grey Branch of the Ontario Genealogical Society, as well as a volunteer at the local Family History Centre, is an expert on the topic. She focused on what resources are available to those searching for their ancestral roots. Emphasis was made on the sources which may be especially beneficial to those searching for an African pedigree. She identified items which are available online and at libraries and archives. It was also stressed, especially through further group discussion, that memories and familial details should be recorded before they are lost to time. Maybe a *genealogical vacation* is in store for some of the participants!



Norma Blacke-Bourdeau

Before breaking for lunch the group was entertained by two spirituals sung by the ever-talented Norma Blacke-Bourdeau. I never tire of hearing such passion and emotion emitted through the human voice. Norma also led the group in the pre-meal prayer. Our delicious lunch was provided by Linda Leith and her team.



Kathleen James

After a wonderful meal, we were entertained by the poetry of Kathleen James. As always, her poetry was not only moving, but inspiring. It was also pleasing to hear some new works. Also included with the readings was a brief history of the importance of and role of storytelling in African culture. Kathleen also overviewd her recent trip to Ghana. A selection of digital photographs enhanced the presentation immensely.



Naomi Norquay, Lisa Scott, Kathleen James, Terri Jackson, and Dennis Scott

The afternoon was rounded out by a panel discussion centering on the topic of *Reaching out to the Broader Community*. This year's panel consisted of Dennis and Lisa Scott, Terri Jackson and Kathleen James, and was moderated by Naomi Norquay, whose words all served to generate discussion surrounding encouraging youth. Many examples of the current youth outreach programs initiated by the Emancipation Celebration Festival were given. The discussion included Lezlie Wells, creator of Niagara Bound Tours, who gave an interesting perspective regarding incorporating history with tourism, in order to educate the mass population.

All in all, the Event was another success. The opportunity to learn through exchanging information and ideas was fabulous. The quality of the Event seems to improve with each passing year. Can't wait for the next one; hope to see you in Durham in 2008!