

10th Grey County Black History Event and Launch of *Northern Terminus*, Vol. 9

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A sunny day outside at Grey Roots Museum & Archives

The Grey Roots Museum & Archives in Georgian Bluffs is home to the annual Black History Event and Journal Launch. Like last year, the event took place in February to honour Black History Month. With such a mild winter, a sudden blanket of snow was an unexpected turn of events. The Event organizers thought that perhaps the weather would be a problem for those travelling from out of town, but at the last minute, the snow stopped and the sun was shining.

The morning began with coffee and name tags. Everyone took this opportunity to talk and get to know each other before gathering in the auditorium to begin the day. The first presentation was a video of Wintley Phipps's performing and giving commentary for John Newton's *Amazing Grace*. Wintley presents a theory that the five notes of the music set to the hymn are an African sorrow song which influenced John Newton as a sailor on a slave ship.¹

Terri Jackson, the Event organizer, began with some housekeeping and introductions. The Warden of Grey County, Duncan McKinlay, also gave an introduction. He thanked Grey Roots for hosting the Event, and also mentioned the importance of bringing history forward.



Speaker Peter Meyler

Peter Meyler, the first guest speaker, was introduced to discuss his book, *A Stolen Life: Searching for Richard Pierpoint*. The focus of this book is on the life of a historical Black figure, Richard Pierpoint, and his role in the War of 1812. After a short coffee break, Meyler went on to tell the slave story of James Henson as it is told in the work by John Frost (pen-name: "Glenelg") in *Broken Shackles*.

Steven Duff, author of *The Hunter of Dreams*, spoke next. His book is a biographic story of Alexander Milton, a naturalist who assisted with the emancipation of Black slaves through the Underground Railroad. Duff's presentation focused on Milton's life, the journey of the Underground Railroad, and the complexity of writing history.



Steven Duff, author of *The Hunter of Dreams*

¹ Editors note: Phipps' theory has been met with debate based on the fact that use of the pentatonic scale is found in many regions, and that Newton initially only wrote the words of *Amazing Grace* to be spoken.

At noon, it was time for a lunch break. Last year, the menu featured an interesting soup made of apples, bananas, and curried chicken called “*Mulligatawny*”. The soup was so delicious, that it was served again this year. Afterwards, the guests were able to enjoy a cake decorated with the cover art for this year’s *Northern Terminus*.



A frosting picture of a quilt made by Shirley Hartley, which is on the cover of *Northern Terminus*

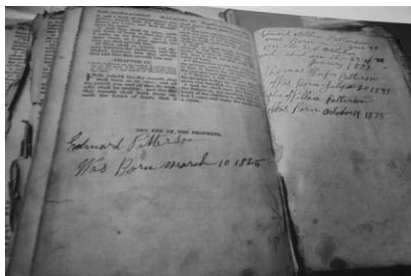
After lunch, Naomi Norquay, Robert Fallico, and Terri Jackson took to the stage to present their findings in researching the history of one of Grey County’s Black settlers, Ned Patterson. Using census, financial data, and vital records (birth/death/marriage), these speakers had attempted to follow the life of this preacher and an important pioneer. His story was so mysterious and interesting that the crowd began contributing ideas toward this genealogical search. Patterson’s Bible was put on display as part of the exhibit *From Slavery to Freedom: African Canadians in Grey County*.



From left to right: Terri Jackson, Naomi Norquay, and Robert Fallico

When the presentations were finished, Terri Jackson led a game of trivia, asking questions pertinent to Black History. The prizes were specialized stamps commemorating African-Canadian Heroes.

Earlier, Naomi Norquay stated a quotation: “The Canadian past is too often made to go away quietly without a struggle.”² This seemed true to the overall theme of the day - bringing history out of obscurity. All speakers had an important piece of black history to share and revive.



Ned Patterson’s Bible

The launch of this year’s *Northern Terminus* was a day filled with rich history and homage to the struggle for Black freedom that should be remembered, not just in February, but all year round.

² Ravvin, Norman. *Hidden Canada: An intimate travelogue*. Calgary, AB: Red Deer Press, 2001, p. 17.