

*Raleigh Township Centennial Museum.* P.O. Box 53, North Buxton, Ontario N0P 1Y0. Alice Newby, curator (519) 352-4799 (w), 354-8693 (h).

*North American Black Historical Museum and Cultural Centre.* 277 King Street, P.O. Box 12, Amherstburg, Ontario N9V 2C7. Barbara Habib, administrator/curator (519) 736-5433 (w), 966-7862 (h).

*Museum of African American History.* 301 Frederick Douglass, Detroit, Michigan 48202. Lenda Jackson, public relations officer (313) 833-5494.

The Windsor-Detroit area holds a significant place within Black history. During the 1830-1870 period, it served as a terminus for the Underground Railroad, which assisted more than 40,000 fugitive slaves to freedom in southern Ontario communities. It is not surprising, therefore, that several African American museums exist in this area, providing permanent displays on

the Underground Railroad and resultant life in the Black communities which were established.

A closer examination, however, identifies scant to nonexistent direct chronicling of Black sporting involvement in those communities. The reason for this absence of sport material remains unclear. Perhaps these museums are consciously avoiding coverage of sport in an attempt to emphasize other aspects of community life which they find more valuable. On the other hand, they may have merely failed to recognize sport as an integral part of community life worthy of comment. The researcher leaves, nevertheless, with a renewed respect and interest in this area, combined with a context to draw upon, and an entrance into uncharted areas of the Black sport experience.

The Raleigh Township Centennial Museum is located in the former Elgin Settlement, a famous Black community begun in 1849 as a sanctuary for fugitive slaves. The idea of creating a museum with a special emphasis on the history and accomplishments of the original settlers and their descendents began in 1964, and community members built the Museum as a centennial project in 1967. Sport related material is minimal. Scrapbooks that have been kept since the museum opened include the occasional clipping, usually unreferenced, on local or professional black athletes. A small collection of books on black history were not sport specific, although a 1989 history of Chatham's Black Community, which is for sale in their gift shop, includes five pages on sport. Census data and assessment rolls dating back to 1851, along with family trees of the area, hold promise for identifying detailed backgrounds on community members involved in sport. Unsorted pictures and clippings donated by community members also exist in a storage area, and might provide further documentation of local sport practices. Locally developed resource materials which could serve as a context for sport involvement include a history of Blacks in Canada, and an almost completed history of Blacks in Kent County.

The idea of a North American Black Historical Museum and Cultural Centre was conceived by Melvin Simpson, a local Amherstburg man, in 1964. The current museum, opened in 1981, is dedicated to the preservation of the heritage of all Black people, and to the encouragement and promotion of community and cultural activities. There has never been a display on sport in the museum, even though one aspect of their permanent display focuses on important black institutions, including the church, the school, benevolent societies, and the Black press. Sport memorabilia is limited to a signed photograph of a 1920s or 1930s local Black baseball team, and some skating and tennis trophies. A clippings file on Black Athletes is located in the basement. Along with general articles on local and professional athletes, small files exist on three famous local athletes—Fergie Jenkins (baseball), Earl Walls (boxing) and Fred Thomas (basketball). Most of these clippings are unclear concerning date and source.

The Museum of African American History is the largest and most professional of the three museums reviewed. It was established in 1965 to document, preserve and present African and African American history and culture, with outreach into the community an ongoing museum priority. The museum moved

to its current location in 1987. They have not, in their 25 years of existence, ever had a special display on sport, although sport figures have been included in exhibits documenting prominent American Blacks. This was evident, for example, in their "Soul of a Nation" display. This bicentennial exhibit on prominent black institutions or persons, had four of twenty-four portraits in the realm of sport-Joe Louis, Jackie Robinson, the Negro National Baseball League, and the Black Cowboy. A library for the archivists' use in the basement of the museum includes a few books on Black sports figures, but no primary data. The gift shop, which boasts several contemporary, scholarly books on Black life, contains only children's books on professional male athletes.

Staff in all three museums are available to assist researchers, as well as provide a place to work. Most importantly, they voiced a willingness to link researchers with appropriate contacts in the Black community. Thus, while the museums do not provide us with insights into Black sporting heritage at present, they do nevertheless whet our appetite about Black community life, and provide us, through their staff, with that very necessary next step-an introduction into the network of community experts who are informed about Black sport. It is time we worked together with them to highlight the black thread in the North American cultural tapestry, a thread largely ignored at present in sport history. In doing so, we can also contribute to their ongoing documentation of Black community life, which seems to have ignored sport, and especially women's involvement, in a manner reminiscent of history in general.

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