

Fugitive and Non-Fugitive Slave Narratives

The four narratives that follow come from *The Refugee: Narratives of Fugitive Slaves in Canada. Related by Themselves. With An Account of the History and Condition of the Colored Population of Upper Canada*, collected and prefaced by Benjamin Drew (1856), a white abolitionist from Boston. Reverend Alexander Hemsley and Mr and Mrs Francis Henderson belong to the large number of fugitives (no exact figure exists, but they were probably between 30,000 to 40,000) who found refuge in Canada through the Underground Railway, although 'refuge' should not be confused with the 'Paradise' Upper Canada was thought to be in relation to the United States at the time. These fugitives found freedom from slavery here, but not freedom from racism. Mr Henderson's statement, '[t]here is much prejudice here against us,' reveals that not all of these former slaves found Canada to be a real 'haven'. While someone like William L. Humbert stated unequivocally, 'I would rather die than go back,' and Ben Blackburn said that, being in Canada on July 4th, he 'felt as big and free as any man could feel', others like Mrs Francis Henderson expressed a wish to return to the United States, 'were [it] a free country'. Indeed, a large number of black Americans who had arrived in the 'Canadian Canaan' as refugees sought to repatriate after President Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation Act in 1863, and especially after the end of the Civil War between the Union and the Confederate States of America in 1865.

Whether we read them as testimonials or oral narratives, brief memoirs or interviews, historical accounts or instances of the slave narrative genre, these four life stories may be brief, but they speak volumes both about slavery and about what it was like to be a black in Canada at the time. These narratives, as is the case with the 116 others in Drew's collection, should also be read in such contexts as the American Fugitive Slave Law (1850), the Radical Reconstruction period following the end of the Civil War, the complex history of the Underground

Railroad, and the legislation and politics in the Canadian colony in that period. And as Sophia Pooley's narrative testifies, the reader should also remember that, while most blacks at that time came to Canada to escape slavery in the United States, slavery—in spite of many Canadians' belief to the contrary—was an institution, albeit not widely spread, in Canada as well. Neither the fugitive slaves nor the black settlers who began arriving in Upper Canada in 1791, nor the Black Loyalists who settled in Nova Scotia in the early 1800s, nor the Refugee Negroes (those blacks who moved to the Maritimes as a result of the 1812 War) were the first black people to come to Canada.

According to Robin W. Winks's history, *The Blacks in Canada* (1971, 1997), there were slaves in New France, both aboriginal and black, before the first recorded reference to Olivier Le Jeune—'the first slave to be sold in New France'—brought directly from Africa at the age of six. Le Jeune was still a '*petit nègre*' when he converted, but, as his teacher, after whom he was named, Jesuit missionary Paul Le Jeune, wrote, he spoke the blunt truth in retort to the statement that all people are equal in the eyes of the Christian God: "You say that by baptism I shall be like you: I am black and you are white, I must have my skin taken off then in order to be like you". Olivier Le Jeune died a free man at the age of thirty.

This is not the right place to recite the history of slavery in Canada and of the beginnings of racism directed specifically against blacks (see Winks's study cited above), but mentioning a few facts about that early period is necessary in order to read these narratives in context. There were about 4,000 slaves, including both blacks and aboriginals, in the middle of the eighteenth century in New France, most of them living in or around Montreal. Upper Canada, through Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe, was the first province to legislate against slavery in 1793, but this act did not free any slaves; instead, it considered free the fugitives who had arrived, and intended 'to prevent the further

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introduction of slaves'. Slavery remained legal until it was abolished in the British colonies by the Act of the Imperial Parliament in 1833, which came into effect a year later. 'The last known private advertisement for slaves appeared in Halifax in 1820, in Quebec in 1821. When John Baker, a Quebec-born mulatto, . . . died [a free man] in Cornwall, Ontario, in 1871, the last person to have lived as a slave in British North America was gone from the scene.' Nevertheless, the elimination of slavery in Canada should not be confused with any consistent attempts to eliminate racism. Indeed, as blacks settled in Ontario, the Maritimes, and across the Canadian West, racism became entrenched as a prevailing reality for them, as well as for other 'undesirables', by the beginning of the twentieth century. The closer Canada came to developing a sense of its 'identity' as a nation-state, the more fiercely it articulated, and officially so, its rebuff of blacks, First Nations peoples, and those it cast as 'Orientals', people from the Middle East, Asia, and Southern Europe.

While, then, the fugitive slave stories recorded by Drew exemplify the experience of many other black fugitives who left no written record, an experience that amounts to having found freedom on the Canadian side of the border, these stories also belong to the genealogy of race relations in Canada. These fugitive slaves crossed the border in different, yet equally risky, ways: through steamers and small crafts that

docked in Oakville or elsewhere in the Niagara River basin, by swimming across the Detroit River into Amherstburg and then walking through farms and the woods to such towns as Windsor (called Sandwich then), often having to hide for long periods, with minimal food, before they could make it through the border. Some never made it, while others were caught and turned back. Thus, while Alexander Hemsley became a preacher at St Catherine's Circuit with the African Methodist Church, and was ordained to the office of the elder in 1842, Sophia Pooley did not enter Canada as a freed slave. Hers is not, technically speaking, a fugitive narrative. Reportedly the first black woman to come to Ontario, she arrived circa 1778 as a slave sold to the Mohawk Chief of the Six Nations, Joseph Brant, who had other slaves as well. She lived close to what is now Burlington. If, as she said, 'I had no care to get my freedom,' it was because there was little a black woman could have done to survive on her own at the time on either side of the border.

Drew's book (now available in its entirety at <http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/drew/drew.html>) is an immensely important document. Still, it behooves us to remember that it belongs to a tradition of narratives that, be they fugitive or not, were more often than not collected by white editors—'a black message . . . sealed within a white envelope' (John Sekora, 1987). In what follows, the comments inside square brackets and the footnote are Benjamin Drew's.

Sophia Pooley b. ca. 1771–d. after 1865

I was born in Fishkill, New York State, twelve miles from North River. My father's name was Oliver Burthen, my mother's Dinah. I am now more than ninety years old. I was stolen from my parents when I was seven years old, and brought to Canada; that was long before the American Revolution. There were hardly any white people in Canada then—nothing here but Indians and wild beasts. Many a deer I have helped catch on the lakes in a canoe: one year we took ninety. I was a woman grown when the first governor of Canada came from England: that was Gov. Simcoe.

My parents were slaves in New York State. My master's sons-in-law, Daniel Ourwaters and Simon Knox, came into the garden where my sister and I were playing among the currant bushes, tied their handkerchiefs over our mouths, carried us to a vessel, put us in the hold, and sailed up the river. I know not how far nor how long—

it was dark there all the time. Then we came by land. I remember when we came to Genesee—there were Indian settlements there—Onondagas, Senecas, and Oneidas. I guess I was the first colored girl brought into Canada. The white men sold us at Niagara to old Indian Brant, the king. I lived with old Brant about twelve or thirteen years as nigh as I can tell. Brant lived part of the time at Mohawk, part at Ancaster, part at Preston, then called Lower Block: the Upper Block was at Snyder's Mills. While I lived with old Brant we caught the deer. It was at Dundas at the outlet. We would let the hounds loose, and when we heard them bark we would run for the canoe—Peggy, and Mary, and Katy, Brant's daughters and I. Brant's sons, Joseph and Jacob, would wait on the shore to kill the deer when we fetched him in. I had a tomahawk, and would hit the deer on the head—then the squaws would take it by the horns and paddle ashore. The boys would bleed and skin the deer and take the meat to the house. Sometimes white people in the neighborhood, John Chisholm and Bill Chisholm, would come and say't was their hounds, and they must have the meat. But we would not give it up.

Canada was then filling up with white people. And after Brant went to England, and kissed the queen's hand, he was made a colonel. Then there began to be laws in Canada. Brant was only half Indian: his mother was a squaw—I saw her when I came to this country. She was an old body; her hair was quite white. Brant was a good looking man—quite portly. He was as big as Jim Douglass who lived here in the bush, and weighed two hundred pounds. He lived in an Indian village—white men came among them and they intermarried. They had an English schoolmaster, an English preacher, and an English blacksmith. When Brant went among the English, he wore the English dress—when he was among the Indians, he wore the Indian dress—broadcloth leggings, blanket, moccasins, fur cap. He had his ears slit with a long loop at the edge, and in these he hung long silver ornaments. He wore a silver half-moon on his breast with the king's name on it, and broad silver bracelets on his arms. He never would paint, but his people painted a great deal. Brant was always for making peace among his people; that was the reason of his going about so much. I used to talk Indian better than I could English. I have forgotten some of it—there are none to talk it with now.

Brant's third wife, my mistress, was a barbarous creature. She could talk English, but she would not. She would tell me in Indian to do things, and then hit me with any thing that came to hand, because I did not understand her. I have a scar on my head from a wound she gave me with a hatchet; and this long scar over my eye, is where she cut me with a knife. The skin dropped over my eye; a white woman bound it up. [The scars spoken of were quite perceptible, but the writer saw many worse looking cicatrices of wounds not inflicted by Indian savages, but by civilized (?) men.] Brant was very angry, when he came home, at what she had done, and punished her as if she had been a child. Said he, 'you know I adopted her as one of the family, and now you are trying to put all the work on her.'

I liked the Indians pretty well in their place; some of them were very savage—some friendly. I have seen them have the war-dance—in a ring with only a cloth about them, and painted up. They did not look ridiculous—they looked savage—enough to frighten anybody. One would take a bowl and rub the edge with a knotted stick: then they would raise their tomahawks and whoop. Brant had two colored men for slaves:

one of them was the father of John Patten, who lives over yonder, the other called himself Simon Ganseville. There was but one other Indian that I knew, who owned a slave. I had no care to get my freedom.

At twelve years old, I was sold by Brant to an Englishman in Ancaster, for one hundred dollars—his name was Samuel Hatt, and I lived with him seven years: then the white people said I was free, and put me up to running away. He did not stop me—he said he could not take the law into his own hands. Then I lived in what is now Waterloo. I married Robert Pooley, a black man. He ran away with a white woman: he is dead.

Brant died two years before the second war with the United States. His wife survived him until the year the stars fell. She was a pretty squaw: her father was an English colonel. She hid a crock of gold before she died, and I never heard of its being found. Brant was a freemason.

I was seven miles from Stoney Creek at the time of the battle—the cannonade made every thing shake well.

I am now unable to work, and am entirely dependent on others for subsistence: but I find plenty of people in the bush to help me a good deal.

Reverend Alexander Hemsley *b. ca 1795*¹

[The famous decision of Judge Hornblower, of New Jersey, some years ago, in a case of a fugitive, will doubtless be recollected by many readers. The narrative subjoined was given by the individual more immediately interested in that decision. Mr Hemsley is confined to his bed a great part of the time by dropsy. He is a very intelligent man, and his face wears, notwithstanding his many trials and his sickness, a remarkable expression of cheerfulness and good-will. His dwelling is clean and nice, and he is well nursed and cared for by Mrs Hemsley, a sensible, painstaking woman, the very impersonation of neatness. As it does not appear in the narrative, it may properly be stated here, that Mr Hemsley has lost two children by death, since his removal to St Catharines; their sickness, alluded to in the narrative, extending through three consecutive years. If any capitalist is looking about him for an opportunity to invest, I think he might profitably employ two hundred dollars in lifting the mortgage from Hemsley's house and garden. Rev. Hiram Wilson of St C. who has managed to keep himself free from the care of riches, by giving to the needy, as fast as he earned it, every thing which he might have called his own, will be happy, without doubt, to attend to the business without fee or commission. Apropos, of Mr Wilson,—we know 'there is that scattereth, and yet increaseth'. But in Mr W.'s case, it requires but little financial skill to perceive, that while 'scattering' to relieve the sick and suffering,—the fugitive and the oppressed,—to an extent sometimes fully up to the means in his hands, any 'increase' must come from those who may feel disposed to let their means assist his abundant opportunities of benevolent action. But to the narrative.]

I was in bondage in Queen Anne County, Maryland, from birth until twenty-three years of age. My name in slavery was Nathan Mead. My master was a professor of religion, and used to instruct me in a hypocritical way in the duties of religion. I used to go to church on Sunday to hear him talk, and experience the contrary on Monday. On the Sabbath he used to catechize us, and tell us if we were good honest boys, and obedient to our master, we should enjoy the life that now is, and that which is to come.

My idea of freedom during my youth was, that it was a state of liberty for the mind,—that there was a freedom of thought, which I could not enjoy unless I were free,—that is, if I thought of any thing beneficial for me, I should have liberty to execute it. My escape was not owing to any sudden impulse or fear of present punishment, but from a natural wish to be free: and had it not been for near and dear friends, I should not have remained in slavery so long. I had an uncle who was a preacher. He had a good many boys. I confided to him that I wanted to leave, and would like to have his boys accompany me. He said he would not dare to tell his boys, for if we were to undertake it, and get caught, it would ruin us all. The fear of being caught was then, I think, a greater restraint than it is now. Now there is a different spirit in the slaves, and if they undertake to escape, it is with a feeling of victory or death,—they determine not to be taken alive, if possible to prevent it even by bloodshed.

I was accustomed to leave home every Saturday night to visit friends seven miles inland, and to return on Sunday night. One Sunday night when I had got back from my visit, I took leave of my friends, they not knowing what I intended, as I had often told them on the Saturday nights, in the same way, that I never expected to see them again. After I bade them farewell, I started for New Jersey, where, I had been told, people were free, and nobody would disturb me. I went six miles, and then ambushed. On Monday night, I went thirty-three miles, and found a good old Quaker—one [we omit the name, but it will be published one day]—with whom I stayed three weeks. At the expiration of which time, I went to Philadelphia. I made no tarry there, but went straight over into New Jersey. After a stay of two months at Cooper's Creek, I went to Evesham, where I resided eight or nine years, being hired and getting my money. No one disturbed me all this time. I heard that I had been pursued by the son of my master, but that not hearing from me he went back. I then received favorable offers to go to Northampton, and I removed there, taking with me my wife whom I had married at Evesham, and my three children. At Northampton I remained unmolested until October, 1836. Then some four or five southerners, neither of whom had any legal claim upon me, having found out that I had escaped from bondage, went to the executor of my old master's estate (my master having been dead six or seven years) and bought me running,—that is, they paid some small sum for a title to me, so as to make a spec. out of poor me. To make sure of the matter, they came about my house, pretending to be gunning,—meanwhile looking after my children, and appraising their value in case they could get them. This I know, for they promised a lawyer my oldest son, if he would gain the case.² They hung round my house from Wednesday to

¹ Attempts to locate the birth and/or death dates of Reverend Hemsley as well as of Mr and Mrs Francis Henderson have been unsuccessful.

² Mrs H. was from Caroline Co., Md. Her parents were made free 'by word of mouth'—but as her mother had no free papers, it was feared that the daughter might be enslaved. She was enabled to avoid the danger by emigration.

Saturday morning, when, while it was yet dark, they surrounded my house. It was my usual way to open the door, put my shoes on, and go off to work. Just as I opened the door that morning, an officer of the town followed the door right in, put his hand on me, and said, 'You are my prisoner!' I asked him 'what he meant by that?' He said he had received a writ to bring me before the court of common pleas. I told him 'I have no master, but I will go with you.' I sat down to put on my shoes,—then the five southerners flung themselves upon me and put me in irons. Then one of them pretended to be a great friend to me. 'Now,' said he, 'if you have any friends, tell me who they are, and I'll go for them.' I showed him the house where my employer lived, and told him to step up there, and ask him to come to me immediately. He came, and commenced reproving the constable for being in so low business as to be arresting slaves for slave-hunters. 'Poor business!' said he. I told him I was afraid they were going to smuggle me off, without taking me before the judge. The constable then, at his request, pledged his honor, to take me safe to the court at Mount Holly. They put me in a carriage, handcuffed, between two armed men of the party. One of these had been a boy with whom I had played in my young days in Maryland. He was there to swear to my identity. On the way, he tried to 'soft soap' me, so as to get some evidence to convict me, when we got before the judge. But I made strange of him and of every thing he said, I wouldn't know him nor any of his blarney. At Mount Holly, the judge told me, that it was alleged that I had escaped from the service of Mr Isaac Baggs of Maryland,—and that, if that were proved I might be sure that I would be sent back. The judge being a Virginia born man, brought up in New Jersey, was found, like the handle of a jug, all on one side, and that side against me. The friends employed counsel for me, and by the efforts of my counsel, the trial was put off to Monday. On Monday, the case was called, and the other side had an adjournment of a week, in order to get an additional witness. I was imprisoned during the week. A brother of the former witness was then brought forward—one whom I had known when a boy. The two brothers, who were both mean fellows, as they appeared against me to get money, swore to my identity, and that they knew me to have been the slave of Isaac Baggs. My counsel were David Paul Brown, John R. Slack, George Campbell, and Elias B. Cannon. The trial was not concluded until the lapse of three weeks. Then the judge decided, that my wife was a free-woman and might remain with her children,—'but as for you, Alexander or Nathan, the case is clear that you were the slave of Isaac Baggs, and you must go back.'

Then Mr John R. Slack went up to the judge, and laid the writ of *habeas corpus* before him. The judge looked it over in quick time—his color came and went tremendously. He answered in a low tone of voice, 'I think you might have told me that you had that before.' The lawyer answered, 'We thought it would be time enough, after seeing how far your Honor would go.' A good old friend—one Thomas Shipleigh—had ridden forty miles to get that writ. On the next day the sheriff took me before Judge Hornblower; two of my counsel went also, and one of the other party. My oppressor planned to take me out of New Jersey on the route, as if we left the State, Judge Heywood's certificate would take effect. Our party, however, were wide awake, and kept within N.J., but they prepared bull-dogs (pistols) in case any attempt were made

at carrying me off. When we arrived at the court, Mr Brainard Clark, my claimant's lawyer, in the course of his argument, stated what great expense the claimants had been to for jail fees, &c., 'even seventy dollars'. Judge H. answered, 'If it had been seven times seventy, it would create no sympathy in me for them,—we can't expect to pass away human liberty for a mere trifle,'—or words to that effect. It was concluded that I should be given into the custody of the sheriff until February term,—then to be brought before the supreme court at Trenton.

I remained in jail until the February term, about three months, as comfortable as a man could be, imprisoned, and with the awful doom of slavery hanging over his head. The case was then taken up by Hon. Theodore Frelinghuysen. The other side could not meet Frelinghuysen's argument. In about three weeks the court declared me a free man. I was then let out of jail; but as I had become so well known, my friends were afraid that my claimants would waylay and smuggle me, and thought I had better leave for the North, which I did. I travelled some two hundred miles, most of the way on foot into Otsego county, N.Y., where I gave out through fatigue. I was sick when I got there. Here I was joined by my wife and children. I remained here until navigation opened,—we were forty miles from the canal at Utica. Then, from visions of the night, I concluded that I was on dangerous ground, and I removed with my family to Farmington. Years before I had had visions of the road I was to travel, and if I had obeyed the visions, the trouble would not have occurred. I had dreamed of being pursued, and that they had caught me, and so it turned out. From Farmington, I went on directly to Rochester, where I remained but one night. My health was good, with the exception of my eyes, which were dim of sight and inflamed, owing to the change from imprisonment to exposure to pelting storms of rain and snow. I felt that my persecutors who brought this trouble on me were actuated by a demonlike principle. We embarked from Rochester, on board a British boat, *The Traveller*, for Toronto.

When I reached English territory, I had a comfort in the law,—that my shackles were struck off, and that a man was a man by law. I had been in comfortable circumstances, but all my little property was *lawed* away. I was among strangers, poverty-stricken, and in a cold country. I had been used to farming, and so could not find in the city such assistance as I needed: in a few days, I left for St Catharines, where I have ever since remained.

My master did not use to do much at buying and selling, but there was a great deal of it in his neighborhood. The unwillingness to separate of husbands and wives, parents and children was so great, that to part them seemed to me a sin higher than the heavens,—it was dreadful to hear their outcries, as they were forced into the wagons of the drivers. Some among them have their minds so brutalized by the action of slavery, that they do not feel so acutely as others, the pangs of separation. But there are many who feel a separation from their offspring as acutely as human beings can possibly feel.

Masters sometimes show respect toward some particular persons among their slaves. I was never an eyewitness to a punishment where a man seemed to inflict it in any spirit of kindness or mercy. I have heard of a merciful disposition at such times, but never witnessed it: as a general thing they would manifest malignant, tyrannical

feelings. I have seen a woman who was in state of pregnancy, tied up and punished with a keen raw hide.

Contrasting my condition here with what it was in New Jersey, I say, that for years after I came here, my mind was continually reverting to my native land. For some ten years, I was in hopes that something might happen, whereby I might safely return to my old home in New Jersey. I watched the newspapers and they told the story. I found that there would be a risk in going back,—and that was confirmed by many of my fellow men falling into the same catastrophe that I did,—and the same things happen now.

When I reached St Catharines I was enfeebled in health. I had come to a small inferior place; there were pines growing all about here where you now see brick houses. I rented a house, and with another man took five acres of cleared land, and got along with it very well. We did not get enough from this to support us; but I got work at half a dollar or seventy-five cents a day and board myself. We were then making both ends meet. I then made up my mind that salt and potatoes in Canada, were better than pound-cake and chickens in a state of suspense and anxiety in the United States. Now I am a regular Britisher. My American blood has been scourged out of me; I have lost my American tastes; I am an enemy to tyranny. I would as lief meet serpents as some people I know of in the States. If I were to meet them, my fighting propensities would come up. To meet one here, I would not mind it; there I would be afraid of the ghost of a white man after he was dead. I am no scholar, but if some one would refine it, I could give a history of slavery, and show how tyranny operates upon the mind of the slaves. I have dreamed of being back on my master's farm, and of dodging away from my master; he endeavoring to get between me and the land I was aiming for. Then I would awake in a complete perspiration, and troubled in mind. Oh, it was awful! When you go back home, remember poor Joseph in Egypt.

I am now about sixty years of age, and have been lying sick about nine months. I have here a house and a quarter acre of land. I have had a deal of sickness in my family, and it has kept me comparatively poor: it would take two hundred dollars to clear my estate from incumbrances. Had it not been for sickness, it would have been paid for long ago.

I have served the people in the provinces as a minister in the Methodist persuasion for some twenty years. My pay has been little, for our people all start poor, and have to struggle to support themselves. My mind has ever been to trust the Lord. I have never prayed for wealth nor honor, but only to guide his church and do his will.

Francis Henderson b. 1822

I escaped from slavery in Washington City, D.C., in 1841, aged nineteen. I was not sent to school when a boy, and had no educational advantages at all. My master's family were Church of England people themselves and wished me to attend there. I do not know my age, but suppose thirty-three.

I worked on a plantation from about ten years old till my escape. They raised wheat, corn, tobacco, and vegetables,—about forty slaves on the place. My father was a mulatto, my mother dark; they had thirteen children, of whom I was the only son. On that plantation the mulattoes were more despised than the whole blood blacks. I often wished from the fact of my condition that I had been darker. My sisters suffered from the same cause. I could frequently hear the mistress say to them, 'you yellow hussy! you yellow wench!' etc. The language to me generally was, 'go do so and so'. But if a hoe-handle were broken or any thing went wrong, it would be every sort of a wicked expression—so bad I do not like to say what—very profane and coarse.

Our houses were but log huts—the tops partly open—ground floor,—rain would come through. My aunt was quite an old woman, and had been sick several years: in rains I have seen her moving about from one part of the house to the other, and rolling her bedclothes about to try to keep dry,—every thing would be dirty and muddy. I lived in the house with my aunt. My bed and bedstead consisted of a board wide enough to sleep on—one end on a stool, the other placed near the fire. My pillow consisted of my jacket,—my covering was whatever I could get. My bedtick was the board itself. And this was the way the single men slept,—but we were comfortable in this way of sleeping, *being used to it*. I only remember having but one blanket from my owners up to the age of 19, when I ran away.

Our allowance was given weekly—a peck of sifted corn meal, a dozen and a half herrings, two and a half pounds of pork. Some of the boys would eat this up in three days,—then they had to steal, or they could not perform their daily tasks. They would visit the hog-pen, sheep-pen, and granaries. I do not remember one slave but who stole some things,—they were driven to it as a matter of necessity. I myself did this,—many a time have I, with others, run among the stumps in chase of a sheep, that we might have something to eat. If colored men steal, it is because they are brought up to it. In regard to cooking, sometimes many have to cook at one fire, and before all could get to the fire to bake hoe cakes, the overseer's horn would sound: then they must go at any rate. Many a time I have gone along eating a piece of bread and meat, or herring broiled on the coals—I never sat down at a table to eat, except in harvest time, all the time I was a slave. In harvest time, the cooking is done at the great house, as the hands are wanted more in the field. This was more like people, and we liked it, for we sat down then at meals. In the summer we had one pair of linen trousers given us—nothing else; every fall, one pair of woollen pantaloons, one woollen jacket, and two cotton shirts.

My master had four sons in his family. They all left except one, who remained to be a driver. He would often come to the field and accuse the slaves of having taken so and so. If we denied it, he would whip the grown-up ones to make them own it. Many a time, when we didn't know he was anywhere round, he would be in the woods watching us,—first thing we would know, he would be sitting on the fence looking down upon us, and if any had been idle, the young master would visit him with blows. I have known him to kick my aunt, an old woman who had raised and nursed him, and I have seen him punish my sisters awfully with hickories from the woods.

The slaves are watched by the patrols, who ride about to try to catch them off the quarters, especially at the house of a free person of color. I have known the slaves to

stretch clothes lines across the street, high enough to let the horse pass, but not the rider: then the boys would run, and the patrols in full chase would be thrown off by running against the lines. The patrols are poor white men, who live by plundering and stealing, getting rewards for runaways, and setting up little shops on the public roads. They will take whatever the slaves steal, paying in money, whiskey, or whatever the slaves want. They take pigs, sheep, wheat, corn,—any thing that's raised they encourage the slaves to steal: these they take to market next day. It's all speculation—all a matter of self-interest, and when the slaves run away, these same traders catch them if they can, to get the reward. If the slave threatens to expose his traffic, he does not care—for the slave's word is good for nothing—it would not be taken. There are frequent quarrels between the slaves and the poor white men. About the city on Sundays, the slaves, many of them, being fond of dress, would appear nicely clad, which seemed to provoke the poor white men. I have had them curse and damn me on this account. They would say to me, 'Where are you going? Who do you belong to?' I would tell them,—then, 'Where did you get them clothes? I wish you belonged to me—I'd dress you up!' Then I have had them throw water on me. One time I had bought a new fur hat, and one of them threw a watermelon rind, and spoiled the hat. Sometimes I have seen them throw a slave's hat on the ground, and trample on it. He would pick it up, fix it as well as he could, put it on his head, and walk on. The slave had no redress, but would sometimes take a petty revenge on the man's horse or saddle, or something of that sort.

I knew a free man of color, who had a wife on a plantation. The patrols went to his house in the night time—he would not let them in; they broke in and beat him: nearly killed him. The next morning he went before the magistrates, bloody and dirty just as he was. All the redress he got was, that he had no right to resist a white man.

An old slaveholder married into the family, who introduced a new way of whipping,—he used to brag that he could pick a 'nigger's' back as he would a chicken's. I went to live with him. There was one man that he used to whip every day, because he was a foolish, peevish man. He would cry when the master undertook to punish him. If a man had any spirit, and would say, 'I am working—I am doing all I can do,' he would let him alone,—but there was a good deal of flogging nevertheless.

Just before I came away, there were two holidays. When I came home to take my turn at the work, master wanted to tie me up for a whipping. Said he, 'You yellow rascal, I hate you in my sight.' I resisted him, and told him he should not whip me. He called his son—they both tried, and we had a good deal of pulling and hauling. They could not get me into the stable. The old man gave up first—then the young man had hold of me. I threw him against the barn, and ran to the woods. The young man followed on horseback with a gun. I borrowed a jacket, my clothes having been torn off in the scuffle, and made for Washington City, with the intention of putting myself in jail, that I might be sold. I did not hurry, as it was holiday. In about an hour or so, my father came for me and said I had done nothing. I told him I would return in the course of the day, and went in time for work next morning. I had recently joined the Methodist Church, and from the sermons I heard, I felt that God had made all men free and equal, and that I ought not to be a slave,—but even then, that I ought not to

be abused. From this time I was not punished. I think my master became afraid of me; when he punished the children, I would go and stand by, and look at him,—he was afraid, and would stop.

I belonged to the Methodist Church in Washington. My master said, 'You shan't go to that church—they'll put the devil in you.' He meant that they would put me up to running off. Then many were leaving; it was two from here, three from there, etc.—perhaps forty or fifty a week. — — — was about there then. I heard something of this: master would say, 'Why don't you work faster? I know why you do n't; you're thinking about running off!' and so I was thinking, sure enough. Men would disappear all at once: a man who was working by me yesterday would be gone to-day,—how, I knew not. I really believed that they had some great flying machine to take them through the air. Every man was on the look-out for runaways. I began to feel uneasy, and wanted to run away too. I sought for information—all the boys had then gone from the place but just me. I happened to ask in the right quarter. But my owners found that I had left the plantation while they had gone to church. They took steps to sell me. On the next night I left the plantation. At length I turned my back on Washington, and had no difficulty in getting off. Sixteen persons came at the same time—all men—I was the youngest of the lot.

I enjoy freedom as all other hard-working men do. I was broken up in Rochester, N.Y. by the fugitive slave bill.

There is much prejudice here against us. I have always minded my own business and tried to deserve well. At one time, I stopped at a hotel and was going to register my name, but was informed that the hotel was 'full'. At another time, I visited a town on business, and entered my name on the register, as did the other passengers who stopped there. Afterward I saw that my name had been scratched off. I went to another hotel and was politely received by the landlady: but in the public room—the bar—were two or three persons, who as I sat there, talked a great deal about 'niggers',—aiming at me. But I paid no attention to it, knowing that when 'whiskey is in, wit is out.'

Mrs Francis Henderson

I was born of a slave mother in Washington, D.C., and was raised in that city. I was to be set free at the age of thirty. When my old mistress died, I was sold for the balance of the time to an Irish woman. When I first went there, I was the only slave they had ever owned; they owned afterwards a man, a woman, and a male child. The man went out to get some one to buy him. He left word at the grocery: the grocer was not particular to report the one who would purchase him to the old man by himself, but let on before the folks. This provoked the Irishman and his wife, and as the old man was taking out ashes from an ash-hole, the master went down, and as the slave raised his head, the man struck him about the temple, with a long handled scrubbing-brush. The old man never spoke afterwards. I saw the blow struck. The old man died the next morning. An inquest was held. I was afraid, and told the jurymen I knew nothing

about it. The white girl said the boss wasn't at home,—she swore a false oath, and tried to make it out that the old man fell and hit his head against the bake oven door. The man was bound over, not to put his hand on a servant any more. Mistress used to pinch pieces out of the boys' ears, and then heal them with burnt alum. She dared not do much to me, as my former owners were in the city, and would not suffer barbarity. Her husband was under bonds of two thousand dollars to treat me well. But she treated the others so badly that some of my friends told me I had better leave. — was there then with some persons who were going to travel north with him, and I joined them and came away.

I like liberty, and if Washington were a free country, I would like to go back there,—my parents were there. There are many congressmen there that the slaves are not treated so badly as in other parts.

Pauline Johnson 1861–1913

SIX NATIONS RESERVE, ONTARIO

The first Native writer in Canada to be published, and published to high acclaim, Emily Pauline Johnson (Tekahionwake) was also perhaps the most popular female writer of that period. Despite this, or perhaps because of her popularity, her poetry and short fiction have often been rejected by critics for their sentimentality, and sometimes because she took on 'the role of serving as mediator between the Indian, particularly the Iroquois, and white worlds'. As she was straddling two different cultural heritages at a time when First Nations people were still thought to be a 'vanishing race', she had good reason to take on that role, albeit in ways that often fed the exoticization and other stereotypical representations of aboriginal people by the dominant white society.

Born to George Henry Martin Johnson, a Mohawk chief on the Six Nations Reserve, near Brantford, Ontario, and English-born Emily Susanna Howells, Johnson was brought up and educated in the fashion afforded to middle-class women at the time. After the success of her first public reading at a literary event in Toronto (1892), and with her family in financial straits following her father's death, she began performing her poetry on a regular basis. Eventually she hired a manager and was billed as 'The Mohawk

Princess'. Critics have made much of her performative style, namely, beginning her program in a European-style ball gown and then, to recite the Native part of her program, changing into a Native costume of her own design that included a fringed buckskin dress, 'a beaded headdress and moccasins'. Touring and addressing audiences that rarely, if ever, saw live performances or were exposed only to such productions as those of Shakespeare, and doing so during the "golden age" of traveling entertainment in Canada, Johnson was both able to share her work with a wide North American audience and make, at least for a while, a decent living. 'The Song My Paddle Sings' was one of her poems memorized by many of her contemporaries, and beyond. Ill health forced Johnson to stop touring, and she settled in Vancouver, where she died.

Nature, paying homage to her Native culture—especially Native women—traditional Native stories, the impact of colonization on Natives, and the misunderstandings between the aboriginal culture and the white culture are the recurring themes in her poetry and fiction. Her publications include *The White Wampum* (1895), *Canadian Born* (1903), *Legends of Vancouver* (1911), *Flint and Feather* (1912), and *The Moccasin Maker* (1913).

A Squamish Legend of Napoleon

Holding an important place among the majority of curious tales held in veneration by the coast tribes are those of the sea-serpent. The monster appears and reappears with almost monotonous frequency in connection with history, traditions, legends, and superstitions; but perhaps the most wonderful part it ever played was in the great drama that held the stage of Europe, and incidentally all the world during the stormy days of the first Napoleon.

Throughout Canada I have never failed to find an amazing knowledge of Napoleon Bonaparte amongst the very old and 'uncivilized' Indians. Perhaps they may be unfamiliar with every other historical character from Adam down, but they will all tell you they have heard of the 'Great French Fighter', as they call the wonderful little Corsican.

Whether this knowledge was obtained through the fact that our earliest settlers and pioneers were French, or whether Napoleon's almost magical fighting career attracted the Indian mind to the exclusion of lesser warriors, I have never yet decided. But the fact remains that the Indians of our generation are not as familiar with Bonaparte's name as were their fathers and grandfathers, so either the predominance of English-speaking settlers or the thinning of their ancient war-loving blood by modern civilization and peaceful times must, one or the other, account for the younger Indian's ignorance of the Emperor of the French.

In telling me the legend of 'The Lost Talisman', my good tillicum, the late Chief Capilano, began the story with the almost amazing question, Had I ever heard of Napoleon Bonaparte? It was some moments before I just caught the name, for his English, always quaint and beautiful, was at times a little halting; but when he said by way of explanation, 'You know big fighter, Frenchman. The English they beat him in big battle,' I grasped immediately of whom he spoke.

'What do you know of him?' I asked.

His voice lowered, almost as if he spoke a state secret. 'I know how it is that English they beat him.'

I have read many historians on this event, but to hear the Squamish version was a novel and absorbing thing. 'Yes?' I said—my usual 'leading' word to lure him into channels of tradition.

'Yes,' he affirmed. Then, still in a half whisper, he proceeded to tell me that it all happened through the agency of a single joint from the vertebra of a sea-serpent.

In telling me the story of Brockton Point and the valiant boy who killed the monster, he dwelt lightly on the fact that all people who approach the vicinity of the creature are palsied, both mentally and physically—bewitched, in fact—so that their bones become disjointed and their brains incapable; but to-day he elaborated upon this peculiarity until I harked back to the boy of Brockton Point and asked how it was that his body and brain escaped this affliction.

'He was all good, and had no greed,' he replied. 'He was proof against all bad things.'

I nodded understandingly, and he proceeded to tell me that all successful Indian fighters and warriors carried somewhere about their person a joint of a sea-serpent's