



Across the River to Freedom: Early Black History in Sandwich, Ontario Curriculum Materials

Shantelle Browning-Morgan
Greater Essex County District School Board

◆ Historical Plaque Analysis

- **Grades:** 5-12
- **Duration:** 1 class
- **Learning Objectives**
 - Students will:
 - examine and analyze historical plaques and their role in sharing and preserving Black history.
- **Materials**
 - Sandwich Arch Heritage Plaque Handout - Caroline Quarlls Watkins and Allen Watkins
 - Federal Heritage Plaque Handout - Mary and Henry Bibb
 - Federal Heritage Plaque Handout - Thornton and Lucie Blackburn
 - Graphic Organizer Handout



University
of Windsor



The materials have an CC Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 2.5 Canada (CC BY-NC-ND 2.5 CA).

Historical Plaque #1

Caroline Quarlls Watkins and Allen Watkins

Caroline Quarlls was born in St. Louis, Missouri in 1826. Her mother was Maria, an enslaved woman of mixed race and her father was Robert Prior Quarles, son of Dr. Robert Quarles, a Revolutionary War patriot. She was owned by her grandfather at birth. On July 4, 1843, Caroline escaped to freedom using the network known as the Underground Railroad. She started her journey by purchasing a ticket on a Mississippi River steamboat and passing into the passenger ranks. She travelled alone by ferry to Illinois, and then by stagecoach to Milwaukee. In Wisconsin, she was aided by locals, and entrusted to Lyman Goodnow for the end of the journey to Detroit, and finally Sandwich. She was under constant threat of capture during her thousand mile journey and was pursued by slave catchers through Illinois, Wisconsin, and Indiana, and finally to Detroit as she was rowed across the river by local abolitionist William Lambert. In Detroit, on November 22, 1844, Caroline married widower Allen Watkins. He had also sought freedom and escaped out of Kentucky with three young children, using the Sandusky Underground Railroad network line across Lake Erie. He arrived in Colchester in 1838. The couple had six children and the former Lot Street in Sandwich was renamed Watkins Street in 1963.

Historical Plaque #2



Historical Plaque #3



THORNTON AND LUCIE BLACKBURN THORNTON ET LUCIE BLACKBURN

The Blackburns' determination to build free lives provides a window on the experience of many refugees in the Underground Railroad era. Having fled slavery in Kentucky, they were arrested in Detroit in 1833. Their capture sparked riots and in the confusion they managed to escape to Upper Canada. Here, the government twice defended them against extradition, and by 1834 the couple had settled in Toronto. Respected citizens, they established the city's first cab company, worked for Abolition and contributed to the well-being of their community.

La détermination des Blackburn à vivre en liberté reflète bien le vécu de nombreux réfugiés à l'époque du chemin de fer clandestin. Fuyant l'esclavage au Kentucky, ils furent capturés à Detroit en 1833, soulevant ainsi une émeute au cours de laquelle ils réussirent à s'échapper vers le Haut-Canada où ils furent défendus à deux reprises contre l'extradition par le gouvernement. Dès 1834, le couple était établi à Toronto. Citoyens respectés, ils fondèrent la première compagnie de fiacres, puis œuvrèrent à l'abolition de l'esclavage et au mieux-être de leur communauté.

Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada
Commission des lieux et monuments historiques du Canada

Government of Canada - Gouvernement du Canada

2000

Historical Plaque Analysis

	Who is being remembered?	Why are they being remembered?	What is the main message of the historical plaque?	How are the individuals connected to Sandwich?	Where is this historical plaque located?
Historical Plaque #1					
Historical Plaque #2					
Historical Plaque #3					