

NEWS FROM THE TRUST

November 2011

Upcoming provincial plaque unveiling – the First Regular Baptist Church

By Jason Clark



First Regular Baptist Church (1857), Dresden
Photo: Canadian Baptist Archives, Divinity College, McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario

Since 1953, over 1,200 blue and gold plaques have been unveiled by the Provincial Plaque Program – one of the Ontario Heritage Trust's best-known activities. These plaques commemorate significant people, places and events in Ontario's history.

On November 20, 2011 at 3 p.m., the Trust continued this proud tradition with an unveiling ceremony at Dresden's First Regular Baptist Church (also known as Queen Street Baptist Church).

Now celebrating the 154th anniversary of its formation, the First Regular Baptist Church is the oldest church in Dresden. On November 24, 1855, the Rev. William P. Newman – a former Baptist minister and an editor at the local newspaper – published an appeal in the newspaper requesting help to build a new Baptist church. Rev. Samuel H. Davis, formerly the principal teacher at the British American Institute and a mason by trade, answered the call. In 1856, Rev. Davis and others began construction, and on November 15, 1857 the church held its first service.

The historical significance of this church lies in its connection to the Underground Railroad. Rev. William P. Newman and

Rev. Samuel H. Davis, who became the church's first two pastors, served as Stationmasters of the Underground Railway before moving to Dresden. Others involved in building the church included refugees from American slavery who escaped through the Underground Railway.

Today, the church stands as a reminder of the dedication and strength of those who escaped from slavery and went on to build a new life in Ontario, and the new provincial plaque shares their story with all who visit.

The Trust was proud to unveil this provincial plaque at the First Regular Baptist Church as part of its program to commemorate the International Year for People of African Descent – made possible with funding from the Government of Ontario.

Jason Clark is an intern from the Ontario Internship Program, currently on placement with the Ontario Heritage Trust.

Breaking ground virtually: Looking through the Henson Family cemetery

By Dena Doroszenko



Using ground penetrating radar at the Henson Family Cemetery in 2011.

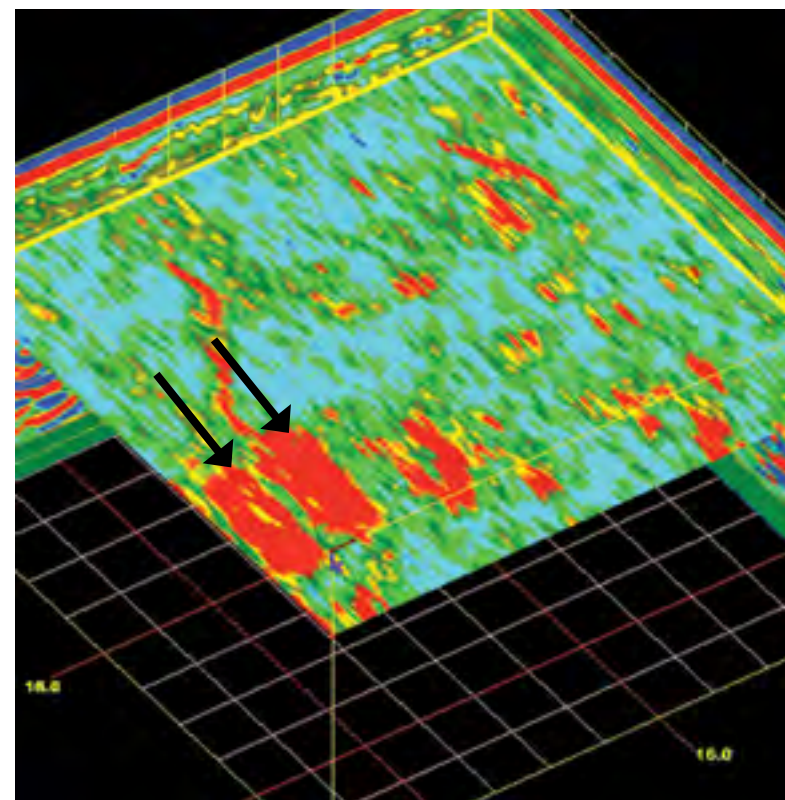


Figure A: Preliminary ground penetrating radar results showing one section of the grid system at the Henson Family Cemetery. The red areas denote two burials that are confirmed by the presence of accompanying headstones.

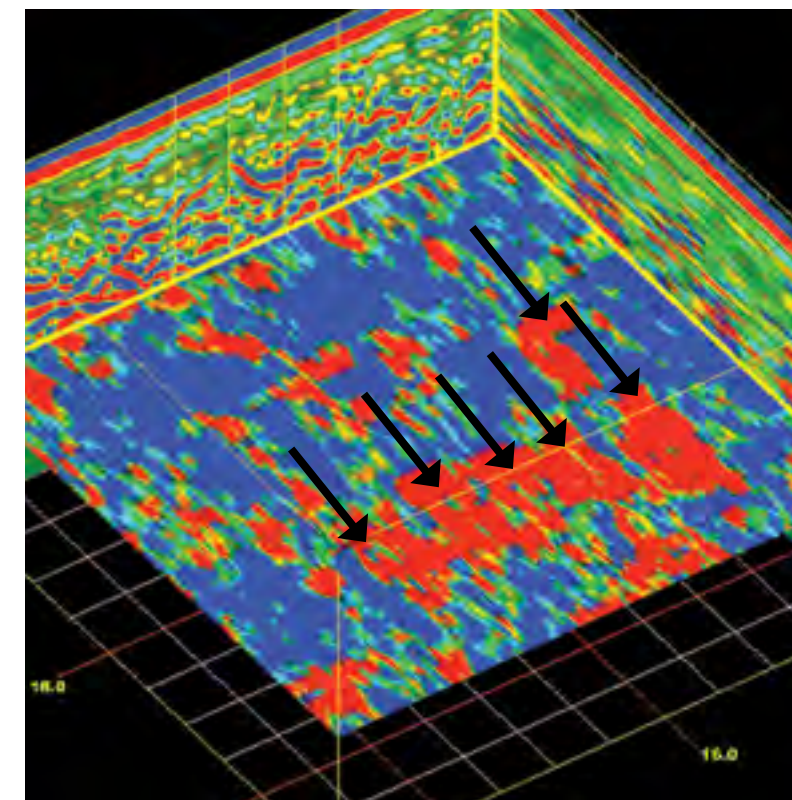


Figure B: While the same area as Figure A, a deeper slice through the soil layers revealed the presence of at least six additional burials.

Many have forgotten how influential Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was at the time of its 1852 publication. It was a catalyst for positive, radical change, encouraging society's rejection of slavery in the United States and around the world. Shortly after the release of her book, Stowe acknowledged that Josiah Henson's autobiography – published a few years earlier in 1849 – was the inspiration for her novel.

Josiah Henson was a renowned abolitionist, preacher, conductor on the Underground Railroad and one of the founders of the Dawn Settlement in Dresden, Ontario. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* Historic Site, located at the heart of the Dawn Settlement, is owned and operated by the Ontario Heritage Trust. Adjacent to the property are two historic cemeteries related to the British American Institute and the Henson family. Within the Henson Family cemetery is the final resting place of Josiah Henson. It remains to this day an active cemetery for Henson's descendants. But because records have been lost over the years, identifying the location of every burial on the site has proven

to be problematic. Although many headstones are visible at the two cemeteries, their positions do not always precisely mark the location of the underlying graves.

In partnership with Sustainable Archaeology at the University of Western Ontario, the Trust undertook an investigation of how many burials may exist below ground at the two cemeteries. Beginning in 2008, the first attempt involved utilizing a gradiometer under the direction of Edward Eastaugh, archeology supervisor and leader of Western's survey team. A gradiometer survey in archaeology is based on the measurement of tiny anomalies in the earth's magnetic field that are generated by human activity.

The results of the two gradiometer surveys at *Uncle Tom's Cabin* Historic Site, while encouraging, remain inconclusive. Although numerous small anomalies were identified at both cemeteries, it is unclear whether these are the result of historical graves, a scattering of building material or a combination of the two. Interpretation of the results is also impeded due to the large number of iron objects in

the area, including recent interments; many areas of the survey were washed out by extremely high anomalies.

Given the mixed results from the first survey, the team returned to the Henson Family Cemetery on August 2, 2011 to conduct a survey using ground-penetrating radar (GPR). This technique involves the transmission of high frequency radar pulses from a surface antenna into the ground. The elapsed time between when this energy is transmitted, reflected from buried materials or soil changes in the ground, and then received back at the surface is then measured. When many thousands of radar reflections are measured and recorded, a three-dimensional picture of soil and feature changes can be created. This respectful approach minimizes surface disturbance – critical when mapping a historical cemetery.

Preliminary results from the 2011 GPR survey indicate that the Henson Family Cemetery contains a larger number of burials than was expected. Twenty-four headstones are visible at the cemetery. The images above show the results of the survey in one 10-metre by

10-metre grid section; these results were found to be typical across the cemetery. Burials marked by headstones were visible near the surface. Deeper in the ground, additional unmarked burial shafts were present. While only four were marked, it appears that at least 12 or more burials are evident.

Survey results will be made available to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* Historic Site, the Henson family, Essex-Kent County and will be presented at the Society for Historical Archaeology conference in January 2012 in Baltimore, Maryland – not far from Henson's birthplace. The team is hoping to return to Dresden in 2012 to complete a GPR survey of the British American Institute cemetery to advance our knowledge of the Dawn Settlement and the legacy of Josiah Henson.

Dena Doroszenko is the Archaeologist for the Ontario Heritage Trust.

Parliament opens for Heritage Week 2012



Join us on February 17, 2012 when the Ontario Heritage Trust launches Heritage Week with the opening of Parliament – a commemorative centre celebrating the bicentennial of the War of 1812 – on the site of Ontario’s first parliament buildings!

Visit www.heritagetrust.on.ca for more information.

Events and activities

The Ontario Heritage Trust regularly hosts or attends events that impact our rich and unique heritage. From provincial plaque unveilings to conferences, we are busy year-round with activities that promote heritage conservation in Ontario.

Here are some of the events and activities occurring over the next few months. Visit our website at www.heritagetrust.on.ca for more details!

November 25, 2011 to January 6, 2012 – Ross Petty presents The Wizard of Oz, The Wickedly Wacky Family Musical at the Elgin and Winter Garden Theatre Centre, Toronto. Tickets are available through the Elgin Theatre box office or through Ticketmaster. Visit www.heritagetrust.on.ca/ewg for details.

November 25, 2011 – Premiers’ Gravesites Program marker unveiling commemorating the Honourable Leslie Miscampbell Frost (Premier 1949-1961), Lindsay Golf and Country Club, Lindsay. Born in Orillia, Leslie Frost was Ontario’s sixteenth premier. He was the first Canadian premier to manage an annual budget of \$1 billion.

November 30, 2011, 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. – Dialogue on the Diaspora: A Black Heritage Expo, St. Lawrence Hall, Toronto. Join the Trust for this free event featuring speakers, performances and exhibits from Black sites and organizations. With special guests Lawrence Hill, Dwight Drummond, Denise Pelley, Beyond Sound Collective and Ballet Creole. To learn more, visit www.heritagetrust.on.ca.

March 1, 2012 – Premiers’ Gravesites Program marker unveiling commemorating the Honourable John Parmenter Robarts (Premier 1961-1971), The Cathedral Church of St. James, Toronto. Born in Banff, Alberta, John Robarts was Ontario’s seventeenth premier. He was premier at a time of economic growth and his government was responsible for creating the community college system in Ontario.

