

# MENNONITE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## OF ONTARIO

### HISTORY OF BLACK/MENNONITE INTERACTION

#### IN PEEL TOWNSHIP: DRIVING TOUR



Saturday, June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2013

#### 1. Glen Allan Park:

A provincial plaque commemorating the Queen's Bush Settlement 1820-1867 was erected here in 2008 by the Ontario Heritage Trust, the Wellington County Historical Society and the Township of Mapleton Historical Society. Mennonites played a role in the development of this settlement by lending seed and exchanging agricultural labour with the Black settlers.

#### 2. Edward and Mabel Hisson homestead:



Con 3 N/W corner Lot 1. The Hissons lived on a fifteen-acre farm, and had seven children. Norman Hisson

died on May 24<sup>th</sup> 2012 in his 87<sup>th</sup> year, the last surviving member of this family. He is buried in the Glen Allan cemetery. In my interviews, several people have referred to Mabel Hisson as having provided childcare for children of the area, including those of Mennonite families.

Note: If you would continue along Concession 3, past Wellington Road 10, you would come to the community of Lebanon. Rella Braithwaite's sister Addie Aylestock attended a 'Mennonite revival meeting' here, probably in the 1940s, and was later ordained as Canada's first Black woman minister.

#### 3. Macton:

John and Harriet Bailey lived on Concession 1, Lot 13 (West Half), near the community of Macton. According to the book *Portraits of Peel*, "They were a black family. Harriett taught Betsy and Sussannah Martin how to crochet doilies. Mrs. Bailey was a large black woman who had a 'heart of gold'" (p. 40). The land has more recently been under Mennonite ownership.

#### 4. Wallenstein:

The Zion Methodist Church & Cemetery were located on Lot 18, Con. 1 (West Side). The church served multiple purposes, being used for worship, education & residence. The church was attended by Blacks and their White neighbours. This is also where the 'Mt. Hope Mission' was located. The mission closed c. 1849 due to the exodus of Black settlers. (source: *Mapleton Historical Society*). Surnames of Black families occupying surrounding farms in the 1840s included: Duncan, Dacey, Mallot and White.

#### 5. John & Eliza Little Homestead:



Concession 1, lot 20 W1/2 was the homestead of John and Eliza Little. The autobiographies of John and Eliza were included in Benjamin Drew's

*A North Side View of Slavery* (1856). In his account, John Little referred to the help the couple received from 'Dutchmen', likely a reference to Pennsylvania Dutch in the area. The Littles cleared and farmed this land, purchased the land which they then sold to Jacob Martin in the 1860s. Neighbours to the Littles included Black families (Osborne, Smith, Jacson, Pawley) and Mennonites (Brant, Martin, Honsinger, Bricker).

#### 6. Yatton:

The land surrounding Yatton was cleared and settled by Black families, including the following surnames: Anderson, Duncan, Osborn, Rufs, and Smith.

#### 7. Dunn Homestead:

This property, now owned by the Metzger family, was the homestead of James Dunn, a Black settler.

#### 8. African Methodist Episcopal Church:

Reverend Samuel H. Brown arrived in the Queen's Bush in 1844 to serve the local population. He purchased one hundred acres on Lot 16 of Concession 4 on which he established the Peel Township AME church, "which became a centre of religious and social life for the community's Black residents" (Brown-Kubisch 2004, p. 73).

#### 9. Lawson Homestead:

In 1873, William Lawson purchased 100 acres (half lot 15, concession 5) as Crown Land from Queen Victoria for \$486.00. The book *Portraits of Peel* records: "Mr. and Mrs. Lawson, who were a black family, raised twenty children in a four room house with a lean-to kitchen on it. Hard to imagine! In 1918, Angus Bauman bought the land from Mary Anne Lawson, who was by then the widow of William. The price was \$4200.00." (*Portraits of Peel*, p. 125). The farm was owned by Bauman descendants until 1990, when it was purchased by Leroy Kramer for \$430,000.00.

Note: This farm is inaccessible except by a very rough, unmaintained road. Continue to #10.

#### 10. Mount Pleasant Mission:

In 1844, Fidelia Brooks (Coburn), a 'staunch abolitionist' from Maine, opened the Mount Pleasant Mission School in this area: "The log building measured 2.5 x 4.5 metres (about 8x 15 feet) and had an exterior chimney, but only one window covered with paper" (Brown-Kubisch, p. 72). The school became known as the 'Abolition School' or 'Yankee School'. Fidelia taught classes and offered Bible lessons in the evenings. Many students were boarders, while other were

homeless orphans. By 1846 she had seven children between the ages of five and twelve living with her. (Note that the actual location of the mission may be at #11)

#### 11. British Methodist Episcopal Church, Concession 3:

The Black settlers utilized a church and school located on the West Half of Lot 13, Concession 3, in Peel Township around 1846. This may have been the location of the Mount Pleasant Mission. The 1845 land petition identifies land immediately to the west of Sideroad 18 as under the surnames Cockburn/Coburn (shanty, 15 acres cleared). The land is owned today by a Metzger family.

#### 12. Corner of County Road 12 and Wellington Road 45/3rd Line:

Names of Black settlers on the lands surrounding this corner as recorded in the 1845 applications for land in Peel Township include: Elliot (house, 6 acres cleared), Francis (house, 6 acres cleared), Goings (house, 6 acres cleared), Howard, Johnson (house, 5 acres cleared), Kerry, King (house, 3 acres cleared), Lewis (house, 4 acres cleared), Stewart (house, about 8 acres cleared), Tomas (house, 5 acres cleared).

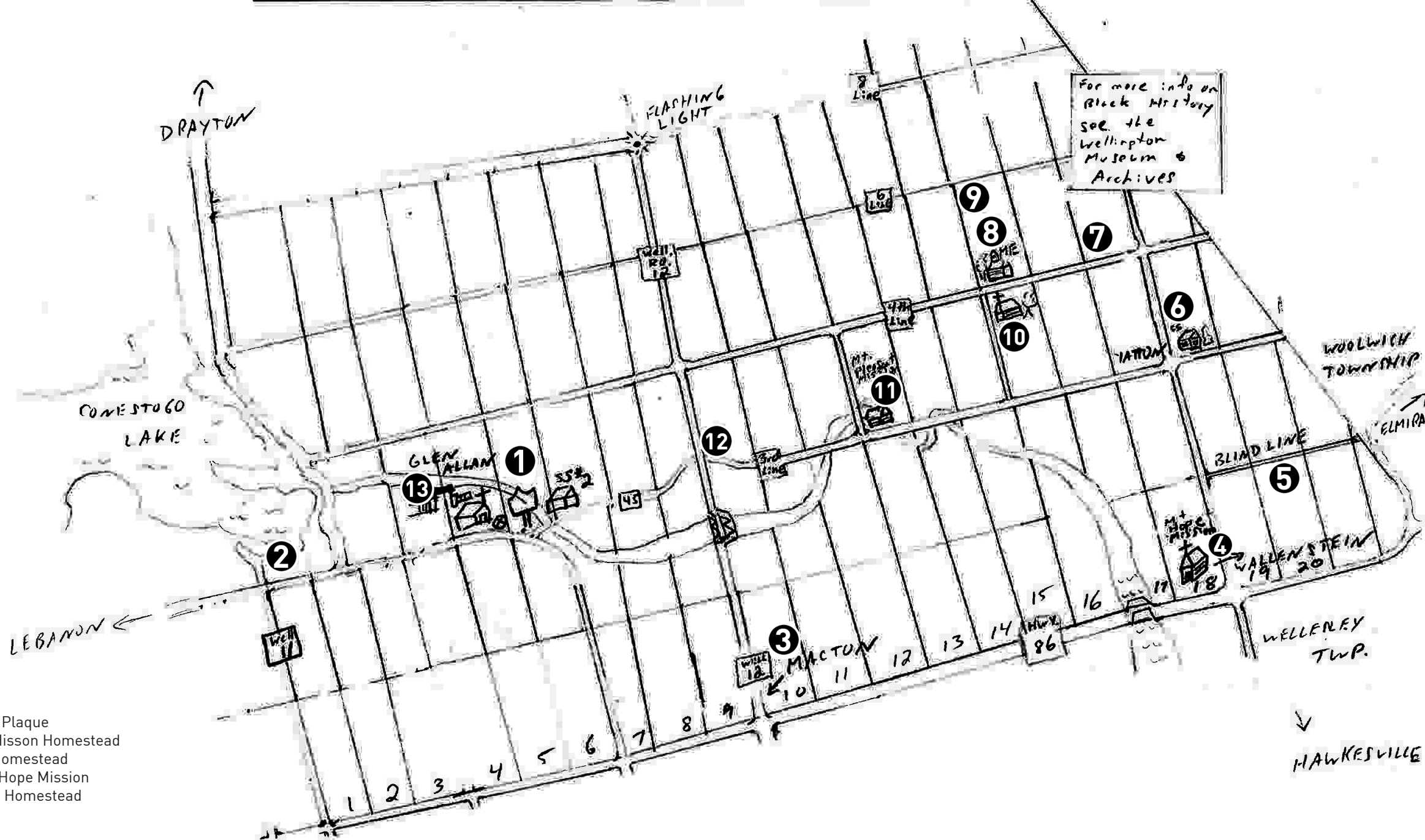
#### 13. Glen Allan Cemetery:

As you walk through the cemetery, look for tombstones bearing the surnames of Hisson and Lawson, two of the Black pioneer families in this area.

Conclusion: As you depart from this tour, keep in mind that our stories and histories are often intertwined with those of others whom we might not at first consider. I encourage you to look into your own family's past and recover these stories of connectedness, celebrating our common humanity as God's children. -T. Epp

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1. Glen Allan Park and Plaque
2. Edward and Mabel Hisson Homestead
3. Macton and Bailey Homestead
4. Wallenstein: Mount Hope Mission
5. John and Eliza Little Homestead
6. Yatton
7. Dunn Homestead
8. African Methodist Episcopal Church
9. Lawson Homestead
10. British Methodist Episcopal Church- The Negro Church: Mt. Hope Mission Plaque
11. Mt. Pleasant Mission/British Methodist Episcopal Church
12. Corner of County Road 12 and Wellington Road 45/3rd Line
13. Glen Allan Cemetery

## ROOTS AND ROUTES: BLACK/MENNONITE DRIVING TOUR

Map adapted from C Schott, courtesy of the Mapleton Historical Society