

## The testimonials of Freedom Seekers in St. Catharines

The following are accounts from Freedom Seekers on what they were told about Canada before they decided to move here. Read through the quotes and discuss whether you would have taken your chances coming here if you had been given this information.

“I had always heard that Canada was a very cold country, that nobody could live in but those brought up in it. I just considered that a man must clothe himself according to the weather- I had sense enough for that; and so, when I came to Canada, which was in cold weather, I clothed myself very well, and I have always got... as well as I could in Hagerstown, MD” Interview with George Ross in 1863<sup>1</sup> -George Ross

“I have heard it as common talk, that the wild geese were so common in Canada, that they would scratch a man’s eyes out; that corn wouldn’t grow there, nor any thing else but rice; that every thing they had there was imported.”<sup>2</sup> -Dan Lockheart

“The slaveholders sometimes tell the slaves stories about Canada to prevent their running away. I understood that Canada was 9000 miles off, and that it was so cold there that we couldn’t do anything. They said it was so cold there that men going mowing had to break the ice with their scythes... The slaveholders told the slaves that they could not live in Canada and that they need not try to get away...”<sup>3</sup> -J. Lindsay

“Our master used to tell us all manner of stories about what a dreadful place it [Canada] was ; and we believed some of them, but some we didn’t. When they told us that we must pay half of our wages to the Queen, every day, it didn’t seem strange nor wrong.”<sup>4</sup> -J. Lindsay

“A great many slaves know nothing of Canada, they don’t know that there is such a country.”<sup>5</sup> John Hunter

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<sup>1</sup> Freedman’s Inquiry Commission interview with George Ross

<sup>2</sup> Drew, Benjamin. Lockheart, Dan Josiah. Interview in *A North-side View of Slavery: The Refugee: Or, The Narratives of Fugitive Slaves in Canada. Related by Themselves, with an Account of the History and Condition of the Colored Population of Upper Canada.* 50, United Kingdom: J.P. Jewett, 1856.

<sup>3</sup> Freedman’s Inquiry Commission interview with J Lindsay

<sup>4</sup> Freedman’s Inquiry Commission interview with J Lindsay

<sup>5</sup> Drew, Benjamin. Hunter, John. Interview in *A North-side View of Slavery: The Refugee: Or, The Narratives of Fugitive Slaves in Canada. Related by Themselves, with an Account of the History and Condition of the Colored Population of Upper Canada.* 50, United Kingdom: J.P. Jewett, 1856.

“I heard when I was coming that Canada was a cold and dreary country...”<sup>6</sup> -Henry Wilson

“The white people at the South said nobody could live here [Canada]; that they had no homes here, no hogs, no cows, and all such stuff as that- that they didn’t raise anything here much at all.”<sup>7</sup> -Joseph Smith

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid Henry Williamson 133

<sup>7</sup> Freedman’s Inquiry Commission interview with Joseph Smith

