

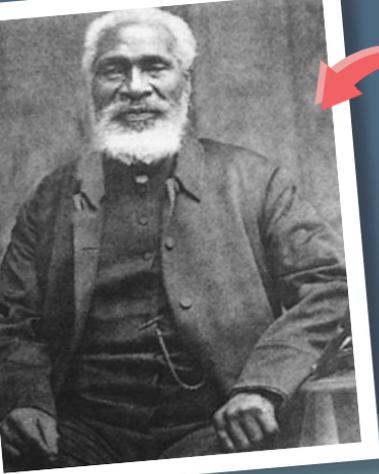
THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD

The name of this escape network for enslaved Black people confuses a lot of people. It *wasn't* under the ground and it *didn't* have trains. It got its name because it had to be kept secret (“underground”) and the people who moved along it went from stop to stop toward their destination. Here’s how the Underground Railroad actually worked.

Slavery was limited and then outlawed in Canada much earlier than in the United States. People held in slavery in the U.S. could be forced back to their enslavers if they escaped. Even free Black people living in states that didn't allow slavery could be captured and enslaved in states that did. Many felt the only way to be safe was to get out of the country.

Thousands of Black people made their way north to find freedom here. Many came on their own. Many also found help through a secret network of people from all kinds of backgrounds united in their opposition to slavery. These people gave freedom-seekers a place to stay, transported them in wagons or boxes with false bottoms, rowed them across dangerous rivers and guided them to the next stop on the way.

Because the Underground Railroad had to be kept secret, there's a lot we don't know about it. The enslaved people who used it had to be strong, determined and courageous to make it all the way to Canada.



While Josiah Henson was enslaved in Maryland, he was beaten so badly that his right arm and both shoulder blades were broken, maiming him for life. He was also sold away from his family. Henson found freedom in Canada in 1830. He started the Dawn settlement for free Black people, near Dresden in southwestern Ontario. He was a Methodist minister and a conductor on the Underground Railroad, bringing more than 100 people out of slavery.

ALL ABOARD!

People involved in the Underground Railroad used code words to hide what they were doing. Freedom-seekers were known as **passengers**, **cargo** or **packages**. **Conductors** guided them to a **station** (safe house) run by a **station master** in the country or in a **terminal** (town or city). Thanks to donations from **stockholders**, station masters could often offer food and a change of clothes as well as a place to stay. **Ticket masters** travelled around telling enslaved people about the secret network, and helping them get in touch with a conductor.



FREE BUT UNEQUAL

Black freedom-seekers were safer in Canada, but still faced racism and mistreatment. After the U.S. abolished slavery in 1863, a large number of Black refugees to Canada returned there.

Harriet Tubman Public School in St. Catharines, Ont., honours the most famous conductor on the Underground Railroad. She lived in the city near Niagara Falls from about 1851 to 1861, planning trips to guide enslaved people to Canada.