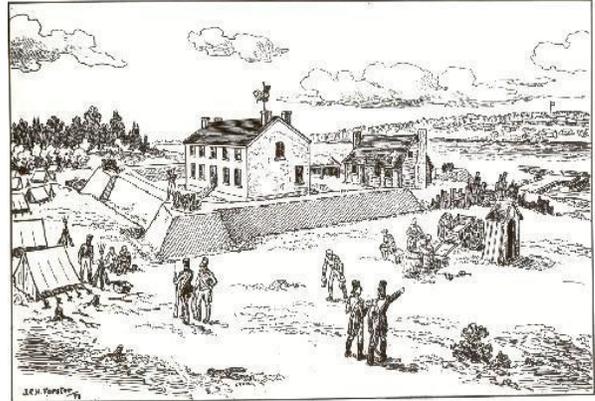


# THE LANDSCAPE OF FORGETTING

A Walk by Camille Turner & Alana Bartol

Neighbourhood Spaces Symposium - November 15, 2014

Welcome to *The Landscape of Forgetting*, a walk in Windsor discovering stories of slavery in the area, a history referred to by Afua Cooper as "Canada's best kept secret". Researchers have uncovered ample evidence to show that Canada's early history includes the practice of slavery, an institution that was legal and governed by laws for over 200 years. *Marcel Trudel chronicles the presence of 4,200 Black and Aboriginal slaves in French territories that later became Canada. Britain was also a slave society.. When the loyalists arrived they brought at least 2,500 slaves with them.* Slavery is a part of our story that according to Katherine McKittrick, has been carefully landscaped out of Canadian history. On this walk we will listen for whispers from the past, look for signs of the future and consider how this history continues to shape the present.



## 1. François Bâby House/Windsor Community Museum, 254 Pitt St W

In polite society the word slave was rarely used. Enslaved people were referred to as "servants" yet they were seen by the law as property and were bought, sold and given away as gifts. Slaves were luxury items and only the most "respectable" households had them.

Marcel Trudel's research reveals that François Bâby grew up in a household with 17 slaves. Below are the names of the enslaved people listed as owned by Jacques Bâby dit Duperron & his wife Susan Reaume, the parents of François:

1. Françoise, panise
2. Marie, panise – Françoises' daughter
3. Jacques-Caton, negre – married to Marie metises
4. Marie, metises
5. Jacques, mulatre
6. Genevive, mulatrese
7. Therese, mulatrese
8. Rosalie, (Rose Lontin) Francois' mom inherited by Francois Baby in 1785
9. Leon, negre Rosalie's son who at 2 ½ was passed on to Francois
10. Marie-Louise, panise (5 kids)
11. Rosalie, panise, daughter of Marie
12. Catherine, panise (rosalie's sister)
13. Augustin, panis - son of Rosalie
14. Louis, panis son of Rosalie
15. Basile, panis son of Rosalie
16. Genevieve, panise of Rosalie
17. Francois, negre

## 2. Jesuit Pear Trees, Dieppe Gardens, 78 Riverside Drive West

Brought from France by Jesuits, pear trees were transplanted to Canadian soil. This memorial is intended as a site of belonging for the descendants of the area's French settlers but it can also be seen as a symbol of the enslaved labourers who helped tend the orchards. Today, the legacy of slavery still reverberates. Detroit is often associated with urban farming and agriculture but Malik Yakini of *D-Town Farm*, a community self-determination project operated by the Detroit Black Community Food Security Network states:

*"Part of the challenge we have with organizing African Americans for this work is that many of our people associate this work with enriching somebody else, associate it with slavery or sharecropping, both of which enriched whites through our labor. And part of what we're doing is reframing agriculture for African Americans, so that we can again see it as an act of self-determination and self-empowerment, as opposed to an act where our labor is exploited to enrich someone else."*  
(Malik Yakini, 2010)

### 3. *The River, Dieppe Gardens*

"On the night of May 13, 1807, a woman and a four-year-old boy stealthily crept out of the home of the attorney James Woods in Sandwich, Upper Canada. Clutching a trunk containing some bedding and a few belongings, the mother led her son to the banks of the Detroit River, a short sprint away. There they met up with some acquaintances from the opposite shore who helped them into a small boat and rowed under cover of darkness for Detroit—a journey of about a mile. After reaching the town, the pair joined a rapidly growing community of runaways who had fled Canadian slavery for American freedom." (Wigmore, 2011)

Water is a powerful symbol for diasporic Africans. The Detroit River was a portal of freedom for enslaved people on both sides. Many lives were transformed by its crossing. The song "Wade in the Water" was a code song. Slaves trying to escape heard it as a warning to stay in the water away from slave hunters with bloodhounds sniffing for travellers. Millions of Africans shackled in the hulls of slave ships crossed the Atlantic during the Middle Passage. The story of the slave ship the *Zong*, that jettisoned its "cargo" of slaves when they were running out of water reminds us that for many, the ocean became a watery grave.

### 4. *The Flags, Dieppe Gardens*

Flags in public spaces are a visual reminder of official power. The state has the power to create laws to keep people in their place. Josiah Cutan, a young enslaved man, became the first person to be executed in Upper Canada. During his short life, he was bought and sold many times. His last owner was John Askin. One night, Josiah broke into Joseph Campeau's store and stole some items. Most likely, he was trying to escape. With no cash and no possessions, escapees often brought something to trade with them on their journey. He was caught, charged with burglary and sentenced to death by "good and impartial" men who acted as a "jury of his peers" in 1792.

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