

From: Roberta Cory
Sent: Sunday, March 17, 2013 3:54 PM
To: Lysynski, Heather
Cc: Nelligan, Maggie; City of London, Webmaster; Usher, Harold; Bryant, Judy; Brown, Denise
Subject: Save the Fugitive Slave Chapel

London Advisory Committee on Heritage

Heather Lysynski, Committee Secretary

Ms. Lysynski,

I have a personal history which involves the African Methodist Episcopal Church at 275 Thames Street. I found out that my daughter lives only ten minutes from Josiah Henson Park in Kensington, Maryland. Josiah Henson was the inspiration for the main character in Harriet Beecher Stowe's blockbuster, Uncle Tom's Cabin, and the founder of Dawn Settlement in Dresden. The park in Maryland preserves the Isaac Riley Farm house where Josiah Henson lived as a slave, by putting it on the National Register of Historic Places. It is an origin of the Underground Railroad.

I live only ten minutes from one of the destinations of the Underground Railroad, and I walk past it frequently on my way downtown. Built by slaves in 1848, the AME Church, or Fugitive Slave Chapel, should have been acquired by the city and maintained all these years. Instead, it became a designated historic site on August 11, 1986, and was designated a "priority one" heritage building by the City of London several years ago. While London allowed the building to be sold to an owner, Aboutown, which sees the Fugitive Slave Chapel only as a derelict building, Maryland sees an opportunity for historical tourism and has created Maryland's Freedom Trail, the pathway to freedom in Canada.

I urge all Londoners to read "The Life of Josiah Henson" and "Ontario's African-Canadian Heritage" and to rally behind the Black History Coordinating Committee to not only save the Fugitive Slave Chapel from demolition, but to make this end of the Underground Railroad a destination for American tourists as it was for American slaves.

This "derelict" building is a priceless gem and its significance cannot be measured in dollars.

Sincerely,

Roberta Cory

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