

BLACK CANADIANS THAT SHAPED OUR COUNTRY

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It is a well-known fact that Canada is one of the most culturally diverse countries in the world; we are, in fact, "the true north strong and free." Canada had a crucial role in the freeing of slaves from the United States in the 1700s and 1800s through the underground railroad. With improved living conditions, black Canadians were able to prosper and changed not only Canada, but society as a whole for the better. Mary Ann Shadd Cary, and Elijah McCoy are just a couple of these numerous black Canadians whose contributions to society remain relevant today.

One of the key figures in the underground railroad was a woman named Mary Ann Shadd Cary. Born to free parents in Delaware, 1823, Mary Ann never took this privilege for advantage. She was a teacher throughout the northeastern United States and even set up her own integrated school in Windsor, Ontario. After moving to Toronto, she became the first female publisher in North America with the *Provincial Freeman* newspaper, promoting the successes of free black people in Canada. In order to do this she had to have a man pose as the publisher at the start. She made it her personal goal to educate American Slaves upon their arrival in Canada. She became a Canadian citizen but eventually returned to the United States where she took a pivotal role in the woman's suffrage movement and became the first black woman to vote in a national election. Cary also worked as a recruitment agent for the Union side of the civil war and was the first black woman to complete a law degree program at Howard University in Washington, DC. Mary Ann Shadd Cary is an excellent example of the accomplishments that people can achieve when they are given the chance, with all odds against her as a black woman 1800s North America, she was able to accomplish things that some people could only dream of. She died in Washington in 1893.

Without people like Mary Ann Shadd Cary and the underground railroad, people like Elijah McCoy would not be able to make the contributions they did to the world. Born on May 2nd, 1844 in Colchester Ontario, McCoy was a Canadian engineer whose inventions were essential to the industrial revolution, one of the biggest turning points in history. His parents were slaves in Kentucky before escaping to Canada through the underground railroad. After studying mechanical engineering in Scotland he was unable to find a job anywhere in the United States due to his race. Instead, he got a job working on a Canadian railroad and invented a device that lubricated the moving parts of a train while it was in motion, this greatly reduced machine related injuries in a wide range of applications. He had a total of fifty seven patents by the time of his death, most being lubrication and mechanical devices for locomotives. His other inventions include the portable ironing board and lawn sprinklers. In 1920 McCoy founded the Elijah McCoy manufacturing company to produce machine lubricators. He died in Detroit, Michigan, 1929.

Although black Canadians such as these have created much of a difference in our society and slavery has been abolished in our continent, the fight is still not over. Black people and other minorities still face tremendous adversity and discrimination. One of the most notable examples was the abundance of police brutality and violence in Ferguson and other parts of the United States and the world over the past year. We still need people like Mary Ann Shadd Cary and Elijah McCoy to keep fighting. It is all of our duties to end racism in Canada, and in the world, forever.

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