

## Video Diary Reflection

Cecily MacKnight

250665846

Due: November 20, 2015

Professor Reid-Maroney

The Blackburn historical site in Toronto, Ontario, is an interesting place of memory. Firstly, it is interesting because it was completely undiscovered until 1985, when Karolyn Smardz Frost and her associates dug the Blackburn's home up. It had been demolished years earlier and Inglenook High School had been built overtop of it. This was not a historical site until about a hundred years after the Blackburn's had died.

Even after the site was discovered, it remained fairly unknown until 1999, when the Blackburn's were designated "Persons of Historical National Significance", and the plaques shown in my video were placed on Inglenook's property. Eight years later, Karolyn Smardz Frost wrote a book called, "I've Got a Home in Glory Land" about the Blackburns' escape from slavery and their lives in Toronto. Once again, the Blackburns were in the public eye.

What I find very interesting about this is that although there has been a lot of publicity surrounding the site, it is still relatively unknown to Torontonians. Toronto is a city with a lot of history and culture, so it is understandable that the Blackburns may have gotten lost in the rich cultural landscape of the city.

However, the Blackburns are incredibly important figures in history because they show the dedication and love within the Underground Railroad. The Blackburns escaped from slavery, not once, but twice, the last time with the help of their close friends and hundreds of strangers. The fact that four hundred men, both black and white, would start

a riot over an escaped slave, shows the changing times within America and the frustration the North felt at the Fugitive Slave Act.

Also, the Underground Railroad was dedicated to helping the Blackburns escaped slavery. They not only helped they get to Toronto after their escape from jail, but also helped them settle down in Toronto and start a new life.

Finally, the Blackburn's continued commitment to helping other fugitive slaves in Canada shows the solidarity the black community had in the face of slavery. Throughout this course, we have seen how slaves faced the oppression of slavery. We have discussed slave rebellions and resistance, the Underground Railroad, and the creation of black communities. The Blackburns acted out all these modes of resistance, through their tortuous escape from slavery to slave involvement in slave communities and the Underground Railroad. The Blackburns represent the hardship, but also the success, of American freed slaves.