

Video Diary Reflection Paper
by Ian Likuski

For my video diary I decided to cover the Buxton Liberty Bell as my topic. While I had heard of the bell in class, I was not entirely interested until I saw the Bell in person during the trip to Buxton, Chatham, and Uncle Tom's Cabin. It was bizarrely fascinating to see a replica of something so symbolic in the United States in the middle of a Canadian community that I had never heard of prior to taking the class, and admittedly I found it more than a little amusing that it was not only a replica, but that the one we got to view personally was actually a replica of a replica. It was one of the most clear symbols to me of the connection that was made between the African-American and the African-Canadian communities as a direct result of the Underground Railroad and the escape from enslavement in the States, showing that even an entire country apart the network of communication between both communities made the acknowledgement of another community's accomplishments entirely feasible, and it was heartwarming to see how even those who lived in one of the "free" states (I use quotation marks considering the Bell was donated the same year that the Fugitive Slave Law was passed, making the freedom even in the North tenuous at best) wanted to show gratitude and encouragement to another place that others facing similar oppression to their own might find safety.

The Buxton Bell also endeared to me in the fact I view it was one of the more subtle forms of rebellion from the African-American community against the bigotry in their own country, as they sent a copy of what was a major symbol of patriotic pride in America for their casting off of British Imperial Rule, and sent it to Canada (which was still a British colony until Confederation, seventeen years later) to represent the freedom that formerly enslaved individuals had gained by not only throwing off American enslavement, but by fleeing to a country that was loyalist to the Empire whom America perceived as oppressors, making it not only an encouragement to Buxton but also, in my opinion, a subtle and ironic insult towards the double-standard of American revolutionary pride in spite of their practice of slavery.

The project itself I found a bit difficult, mostly as I found the instructions rather broad to interpretation, and originally presumed that it was meant to be simply a documentary rather than a reflection (the term “video diary” has several different meanings, and I’m still not entirely sure what one is). The other aspect that made it difficult for me was having to work with video editing and sound recording software I hadn’t used before, as the last time I had used programs of that kind was years ago while still working on the Windows XP Operating System, so it took a few hours just to understand how to get the programs working, let alone to start getting actual work done. Unfortunately the only programs I had access to were also not great in quality, leading to progress made being lost four different times due to crashes and bugs, but I am still relatively satisfied with the final product.