

MINK FAMILY

by Philip Smart

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Ontario was Ahead of Britain in Abolishing Slavery

The father and grandfather Mink of John Tobias Mink were not part of the underground railroad to Canada. The original Mink was a black slave of John Jost Herkimer, younger brother of the hero Nicholas, at the Battle of Oriskany. Nicholas was a patriot who lost his leg and died about 10 days later.

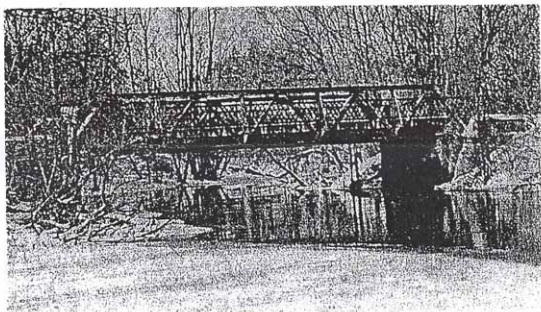
John Jost Herkimer received a land grant for war services as a Loyalist for the old government. The land was at Lemoine Point. Mink accompanied Herkimer into what became Ontario in 1784.

In 1796, the provincial government, then chaired by Lt.-Gov. John Graves Simcoe, passed an act to the effect that no new slaves should be imported. Blacks under 18 years of age were declared free. Blacks who did stay on with the household were then paid minimum wage. No Ontarian was going to hunt down a healthy slave, for there was no price on their head. A similar law was passed in the legislature of Nova Scotia in 1798. This all happened before Wilberforce

(remember him in British history?) declared in 1807 that one could not buy or sell a black slave. There was no slavery within the British Empire as of 1833. Thus, Ontario/Upper Canada was a few years in advance of Wilberforce, and this fact did not get mentioned in our school texts of pre-1953.



Dominion Hotel/Stage Coach Inn, Odessa



Old Mink's Bridge County Rd 1, East of Napanee

Tobias had several uncles, the most prosperous being George Mink of Kingston, who owned a livery stable on Clarence Street, middle of the block, and part of the post office building of today. George Mink got the contract for stagecoach customers to Toronto. The stage stopped in Odessa at 4 a.m., bringing the mail for the Odessa region. George also gained the contract for Montreal. This east-west route lost out to the Grand Trunk Railway in 1856. George still had routes to such northern villages as Yarker, to connect with the railway. The oldest uncle of Tobias, James Mink, owned a hotel in Toronto and his story has been filmed for television.

Next time you drive over Mink's Bridge, between Newburgh and Napanee, think of Tobias - his house was immediately north of the bridge on the east bank.