

The Story of Josiah Henson: The Real Uncle Tom

Description: The term “Uncle Tom” from Harriet Beecher Stowe’s novel *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* became a stereotypical figure who was overeager to win the approval of whites - which is a far cry from the model of Josiah Henson upon whom Stowe based her novel. Josiah Henson received a brutal upbringing and was cheated of his manumission papers from his owner, Isaac Riley. Josiah fled with his wife and children from the Riley family in Owensboro, Kentucky, and made it to Canada where they established the Dawn Settlement School in Dresden, Canada for fugitives. Henson and Henry Bibb worked together for Black rights in Canada. Henson returned several times to the states to help more than 200 fugitives reach freedom.