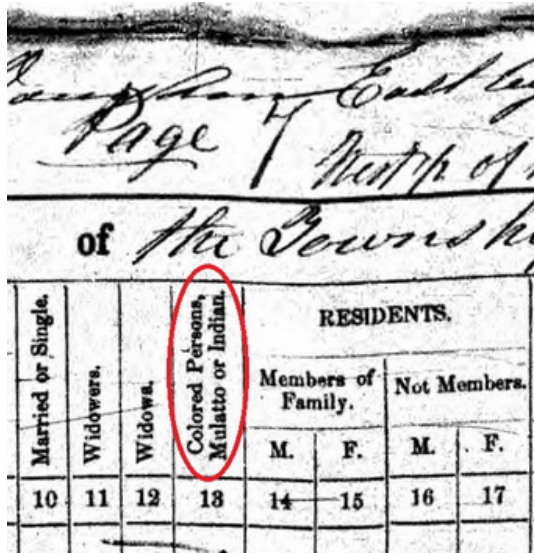


BLACK HISTORY MONTH

KING HERITAGE & CULTURAL CENTRE

FEBRUARY 7, 2022



BLACK HISTORY IN KING TOWNSHIP

Welcome back to the King Heritage & Cultural Centre Black History Month Newsletter. While we research and study black history in King all year round, it is important to take this time to reflect back to celebrate the many accomplishments of Black Canadians.

Image: 1871 Canada Census

GERTRUDE JOHNSON: LIFE AS A DOMESTIC SERVANT

When researching any historical figure, it is always easiest to look at those in the spotlight. Community leaders who have streets and parks named after them whose names are rarely forgotten. Often the reason these figures can be so prominent in their communities is because they have the time and resources to be out in the public eye. They aren't dealing with mundane household tasks, because they had servants to handle those things for them.

One such servant was Gertrude Johnson. In our research Gertrude only appears in the historical record once, as a domestic servant in the household of Dr. George Lockhart of King City in the 1911 Canadian Census. Dr. Lockhart would likely have reported Gertrude in the census, so the information listed is likely his view of her. She was listed as being sixteen, born in Canada, working in the house for one year, Anglican in religion and "Mulatto"* in race.

We searched for Gertrude in both the 1901 and 1921 census records, but she was no where to be found. There could be several reasons for this. She may have married and changed her name, moved away or just never reported to the census takers. While this does mean we don't know anything else about her life specifically, we can explore what we do know about Canadian domestic servants in the early 20th Century to better understand her life with the Lockhart family.

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**Mulatto is a historical term used to describe someone who was biracial with both Black and white ancestry. Now the term is seen as offensive as it literally means "mixed breed" or "mule."*

Do you have a viewpoint on Black History in King? Share it in the newsletter! Contact us at kingmuseum@king.ca with the subject line Black History Newsletter.

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GERTRUDE JOHNSON: LIFE AS A DOMESTIC SERVANT

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In the early 1900s Canada was going through a “servant shortage,” specifically, a shortage of women who were willing to be live-in domestic servants. Life as a domestic was difficult and often prevented women from having a family, so fewer and fewer were willing to do it, when comparing it with shop or factory work where after hours your time was your own. Additionally, employers were often selective about who was working in their homes, preferring them to be Canadian or British born, speak English, and share the same religion as the family. Gertrude ticked some of these boxes for the Lockharts. Like them, she was Anglican and would have attended church with them every Sunday. She was also Canadian born, which means she would likely have been somewhat literate and attended a Canadian school for a time.

In 1910-1911 when Gertrude was working for the Lockharts they had three children ranging from 3 months to 10 years old. She was the only live-in servant listed in the census, which means she would have been responsible for a wide-range of household tasks including cooking, cleaning, laundry, mending and helping with the children. The work would have been hard and the hours long. In the census records Dr. Lockhart listed Gertrude as working 60 hours a week with an annual wage of \$96.00 per year. Even at this time, this wage was low with the annual average pay for domestic servants was \$120.00 for women and \$272.00 for men.

The benefit of the servant shortage for Gertrude was that she would have been easily able to find work elsewhere. By the 1921 census she was no longer living with the Lockharts and may have left years before. While we do not know her fate, we can certainly wish her the best and hope that she had a good life.

Name	Relationship	Age	Sex	Birth Date	Age in 1911	Country of Birth	Religion	Occupation
Lockhart Geo B.	Head	18	M	Sept 1849	41	Irish	Canadian	Physician
Jeannie	Wife	17	F	May 1874	36	Irish	Canadian	none
W Douglas	Son	3	M	Feb 1901	10	Irish	Canadian	none
Bambolie	son	2	M	Jan 1904	7	Irish	Canadian	none
Patricia	Daughter	7	F	June 1904	7	Irish	Canadian	none
Johnnie Gertrude	Domestic	7	F	May 1895	16	Malotto	Canadian	Domestic

Image: 1911 Canada Census, Lockhart family and Gertrude Johnson