Peter Butler III - Rose Fortune Scholarship

Peter Butler III and Rose Fortune were arguably Canada's first Black law enforcers. The A.B.L.E. scholarship is named in their honour.

ROSE FORTUNE 1774-1884

Rose Fortune was born into slavery in the southern United States. The Devine family who eventually made their way to Annapolis Royal in Nova Scotia as Loyalist refugees following the American Revolution owned her. It was in Annapolis Royal that Rose Fortune gained her freedom.

In the late 1700's Ms. Fortune was engaged in business as the owner of one of Annapolis Royal's first cartage companies. She worked in the port area and as a consequence of being in the area became increasingly involved in maintaining the peace as a self-styled policewoman. The community accepted her self-appointed status and came to appreciate her commitment. As a physically strong woman she was able to keep the town's youth very much in line. She was known for spanking local mischief-makers and rousing local dignitaries from their beds.

It has been generally accepted that Rose Fortune would have been Canada's first female law enforcement officer. Since her role as a law enforcer was understood by the community to be voluntary her livelihood depended on her cartage company. And yet even as her business flourished she continued her involvement in law enforcement and gained the respect of both rich and poor in the community.

Rose Fortune died in 1884 at the age of ninety.
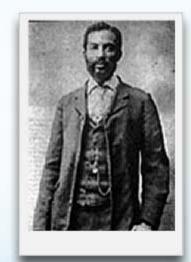
PETER BUTLER III 1859-1943

Peter Butler III was born in Lucan, Ontario. His policing career spanned fifty years, first as Lucan's tough but fair county constable and later as an Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) officer. In 1883 he became a member of the Middlesex County Police Service in which he served for thirty years. In 1913 he joined the Ontario Provincial Police retiring in 1936.

He was a large man with seemingly unlimited energy and with his sizeable hands and a large baton he maintained the peace and kept order. Notably, he wore a gun only when transporting prisoners to jail in London or while chasing cattle rustlers. Despite his position on carrying a gun he was a crack shot and owned a large collection of firearms.

Although some of the town's British immigrants objected to a black police officer, Butler quickly gained their respect. Despite his physical prowess he was a peaceful man known for his kindness and generosity. Every Sunday Butler would bring Lucan prisoners a huge bucket of beer for twenty-five cents. He often used his home rather than the lock-up to detain local drunks and offenders he felt should not be on the streets.

Constable Peter Butler III died in 1943. In his honour local dignitaries from the county and the province, as well as guests from the United States attended his funeral. Six OPP officers followed the casket to the family plot on Sauble Hill.

A.B.L.E. is proud to keep the memory of Rose Fortune and Peter Butler III alive by awarding scholarships in their name.