

## **Perth and District Historical Society**

**Speaker:** Allison Margot Smith

**Place:** Royal Canadian Legion, Perth, Ontario

**Meeting date & time:** January 16, 2025 at 7:30 pm

We open the new year with a presentation on January 16, 2025 by Allison Margot Smith. For this month, our talk will feature a prelude commemorating Black History Month of February with the story of Mary Ann Camberton Shadd Cary. She was an anti-slavery activist, journalist, publisher, teacher and lawyer at a time when few of those professions, excepting teaching, were open to women, let alone a black woman.

There is much to learn and appreciate about Mary Ann Shadd as she is generally known. In essence, she was a remarkable woman. She was born in 1823 in the United States to parents who were abolitionists and actively involved in the Underground Railroad. They also valued education for their children – traits that shaped Mary Ann’s character and beliefs. She began teaching after finishing her education at the age of 16 and started a school for black children. However, as a result of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, the family moved to what is now Windsor, Ontario (Canada West at the time). With the move into the Canadas, Mary Ann continued her activities of teaching; promoting her ideas of education as a means of achieving freedom and independence as well as racial equality with integration with whites and blacks; she started an anti-slavery paper and while male names were on the masthead, it was in fact her paper.

She married in 1856 and they had a son and a daughter. After her husband’s death in 1860, Mary Ann returned to the US where she became active on behalf of the Union Army for the Civil War. After the War, she turned her attention to equality of men and women and joined the National Women’s Suffrage Association. She returned to teaching and also enrolled in university, achieving her law degree in 1883. She died in 1893 in Washington DC.

Mary Ann Camberton Shadd Cary has been recognised in both Canada and the US for her achievements – Canada has called her a Person of National Historic Significance, had a stamp issued in her honour, has been featured in the Citizenship test guide, a public school in Toronto named after her. Also, in 2020, her 197 birthday was recognised with the Google Doodle.

The Perth and District Historical Society is dedicated to learning about and popularising our history and is a forum for discussion and celebration of our area’s rich culture and heritage. The meetings are held the third Thursday of the month and are open to the public, at 7:30 pm at the Royal Canadian Legion, Perth-Upon-Tay, Branch 244, home of the Hall of Remembrance, 26 Beckwith St. E. in Perth. The usual “Toonie Fee” applies for each meeting. For information, contact Ellen Dean at 613-264-8362. Our website at [www.perthhs.org](http://www.perthhs.org) has additional information about us and items of interest related to Perth and district.

Article submitted by the Perth and District Historical Society