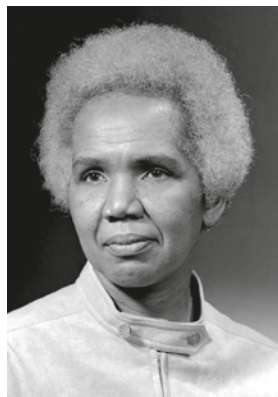


School near Nanaimo. She thus became the first Black teacher on Vancouver Island in 1874, earning \$40 per month. One of the students who boarded with her at the school was her sister Marie. On weekends, Emma rode back to their home on horseback with her sister, Marie, behind her. She married James Clarke in 1878. Sadly, Emma Stark Clarke died in 1890 at the young age of 33 of an undetermined illness. She is remembered as one of the notable Black pioneers of 19th-century British Columbia.



Courtesy of Royal BC Museum and Archives - Image I-32427

Rosemary Brown

Rosemary Brown emigrated from Jamaica, where she was born in 1930. She came to Canada in 1951 to complete her studies. She began a career in social work at the Montreal Children's Hospital. After moving to British Columbia and starting a family, she resumed

her social work career by taking up posts with the Children's Aid Society of Vancouver, the Riverview Mental Hospital, and also worked as a counsellor at Simon Fraser University. Brown was the Ruth Wynn Woodward Chair in the Department of Women's Studies at Simon Fraser University in 1987.

Brown became a political activist advocating for racial and gender equality and entered BC politics in 1972 by becoming the first Black woman elected as an NDP member to the Legislative Assembly. Three years later she ran for the leadership of the federal NDP Party, coming second to Ed Broadbent.

After politics, Brown continued to promote women's advancement internationally. In 1993 she was appointed Chief Commissioner of the Ontario Human Rights Commission, where she served until 1996. She was married to psychiatrist Dr. Bill Brown and the couple had three children. In 2003, Rosemary Brown passed away. Canada Post has issued a commemorative stamp in Rosemary Brown's honour, unveiled February 1, 2009.

Read more about Black Canadian history on our website at: blackpeopleshistory.ca



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Women in Canadian History



Black women contributed to the development of Western and Northern Canada.



High school photo of Barbara Howard. (courtesy BC Sports Hall of Fame)

Barbara Howard

Canadian sprinter and educator, Barbara Howard, was born in 1920 in Vancouver. At only 17, she broke the British Empire record in the 100 yard dash and in 1938, went on to win silver and bronze medals in relay races at the British Empire Games in Sydney, Australia. She is believed to be the first Black woman to represent Canada in international competition.

Unfortunately, the outbreak of World War II quashed her dreams of competing in the Olympic Games of 1940 and 1944, as they were cancelled. However, Barbara Howard went on to break ground in the educational field. She attended the Normal School, graduating with a certificate in teacher training. She later received a Bachelor of Education degree from the University of British Columbia in 1959. Howard became the first racialized person to teach in the Vancouver public school system. She taught for 43 years, retiring in 1984. In addition to her contributions as an educator, Howard was active in the United Church and in Canadian Girls In Training, a mentorship program established by the YWCA.



Moorland-Spangard Research Center, Howard University, Washington, D.C.

Maria Gibbs

Maria Gibbs, alongside her businessman husband Mifflin Gibbs, was among the founders of Victoria, B.C. Originally from Kentucky, Maria Ann Alexander was most likely the daughter of R.M. Johnson, vice president in President Martin Van Buren's administration, and his enslaved mistress, Lucy Chinn (Alexander). After moving to Victoria and setting up a wholesale

business, Mifflin Gibbs travelled to Oberlin Ohio, married Maria Alexander, and brought her back to British Columbia. Maria had attended Oberlin College in Ohio from 1852-54, making her one of the best educated women in Victoria. She became known as "Lady Gibbs" to admirers, suggesting the couple enjoyed a certain status and level of relative wealth. Maria gave birth to six children, but after seven years, she returned to Oberlin. Of her surviving children, Horace became a printer in Aurora, Illinois. Hattie Gibbs Marshall graduated from the Conservatory of Music at Oberlin College and became a musical director of the public schools in Washington, D.C. Her sister Ida Alexander Hunt taught English in Washington, D.C., later moving to France.



Dorothy Wills

Dorothy Abike Wills, B.Sc., M.S.W., M.A., Ph.D., LL.D., DHL (Honoris Causa), C.M., retired on June 2000, as the Dean of the Faculty of Applied Technologies at Vanier College, Quebec. She served as a member of the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada,

Convention Refugee Determination Division, for six years. An Educator in the areas of Business Education, Social Work, and Andragogy (the method by which adults learn), she has taught at the High School, CEGEP and University levels. She has been named to Federal, Provincial and Municipal Committees; and has had extensive involvement in various Black Community organizations. She is the recipient of several awards, including the Mount Saint Vincent University Alumni Jubilee Award of Distinction, an Honorary Doctor of Laws degree from both Concordia University (1989) Dalhousie University (1986), an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters from Mount Saint Vincent University (2007), the Order of Canada (1989), The Martin Luther King Junior Award of Excellence, the Ministers Award for Excellence in Race Relations, and, has been named Woman of the Year by Salon de la Femme du Quebec, 1990.



Image Credit: Courtesy of Myrtle Holloman, Salt Spring Island, B.C. & Peggy Cartwright

Emma Stark

Emily Arabella Stark, otherwise known as Emma Stark, was the daughter of Salt Spring Island pioneers Louis and Sylvia Stark. She was born in California on February 17, 1856 and arrived as a toddler with her parents and her brother, Willis, in the summer of 1860. As a child, Emma endured the bitter winters, the danger of wild animals,

smallpox, and conflicts. She attended the log cabin classroom of John Craven Jones, another African American settler with a first class teaching certificate who had graduated from Oberlin College, Ohio. Emma herself graduated high school in Nanaimo B.C. and, at the age of 18, was hired to teach at the one-room Cranberry-Cedar