



The Skillman Foundation Presents

# YAKTIVITIES FOR HELPING KIDS

## William Lambert Remembering a Local Hero for Black History Month

William Lambert was a 19th century activist in the Underground Railroad and an advocate for the rights of African Americans.

As such, he played an important role in the lives of African Americans seeking to achieve first-class citizenship in a society that did not welcome the idea.

Because he lived close to Canada, Lambert's involvement in the effort to help enslaved people escape bondage into Ontario was substantial.

Born in Trenton, New Jersey, where he was educated in Quaker schools, Lambert relocated to Detroit in 1838 at the age of 21.

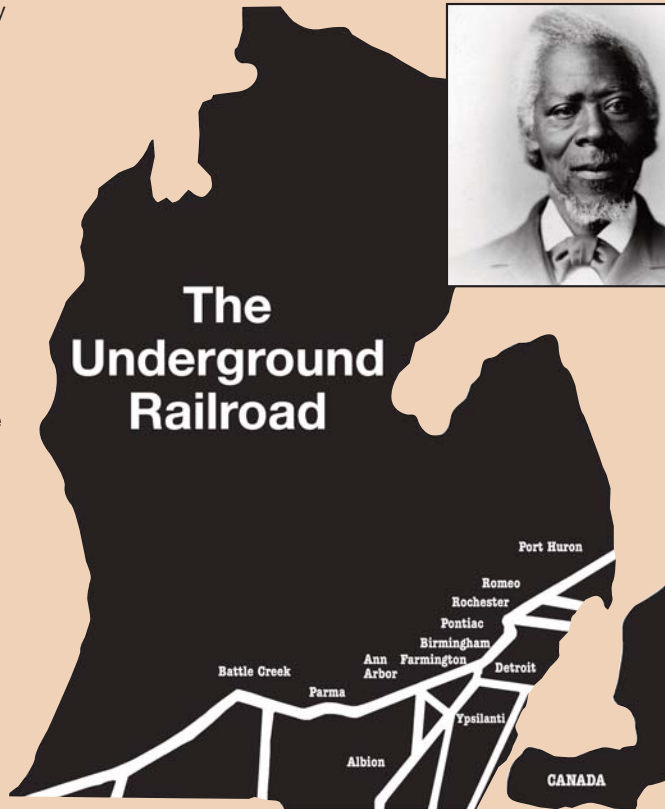
By profession, he was a tailor with a shop on East Jefferson. He was also a founder of the St. Matthew Episcopal Church.

Shortly after settling in Detroit, Lambert became the secretary of the first state convention of colored citizens ever held in Michigan. In this capacity, he successfully argued that the word "white" be taken out of the state constitution.

In 1840, he addressed the Michigan legislature, arguing that it amend the state constitution to allow for the enfranchisement of African Americans. In 1843, he helped organize the first State Convention of Colored Citizens and served as its chairman.

Married with six children, William Lambert was a highly respected citizen, well and favorably known in Detroit.

He also was one of the principal



conductors of the secret organization called the Underground Railroad, and in all he did, he urged African Americans to participate actively in the struggle for freedom and equality.

William Lambert's home, where he lived for more than 50 years, was located at the northeast corner of East Larned and St. Aubin (at that time it was 497 Larned Street East).

It is now considered one of Detroit's Black Historic Sites and marked with an official state marker.

During the final three months of Lambert's life, he seemed to lose his mental grasp, and he took his own life in 1890 at the age of 83.

Yet nearly 120 years later, as Michigan and the nation celebrate Black History Month, his achievements in the cause of equality still earn admiration and respect.

### THINK ABOUT WAYS TO TAKE ACTION

The Underground Railroad was an example of citizens taking action independent of government to correct a problem. Conductors on the Underground Railroad sheltered escaped slaves and helped them find their way to freedom in Canada or free communities. With family and friends, talk about problems in communities or neighborhoods on which citizens could work together. Make a list of issues that most affect families or children. Then talk with neighbors or friends and come up with ways people could correct problems or bring positive change to the community



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