To: Chair and Members
Community Services Standing Committee

From: Walter G. Peace
Hamilton Historical Board

Date: October 4, 2006

Re: Little Africa Plaque

Recommendation:
That the wording for the Little Africa plaque, hereto attached and marked as Appendix A to Report No. 06-003(HHB), be approved.

Background:

On September 14, 2005 Council approved the Priority List for City of Hamilton commemorative plaques. Little Africa was approved as the subject for the 2006 plaque.

The attached wording was researched and authored by Mr. Robin McKee, citizen member of the Joint Plaquing Sub-committee. This wording was approved by the Ontario Heritage Trust 05 April 2006, by the Joint Plaquing Sub-committee at their meeting on 02 May 2006, by the Hamilton Historical Board at their meeting on 09 May 2006 and by the Municipal Heritage Committee-Hamilton LACAC at their meeting on 22 June 2006.

The plaque will be installed on Concession Street in the area of 'The Mission' referenced in the plaque. The dedication ceremony is tentatively planned for Emancipation Day, August 1, 2007.

Analysis/Rationale:

It is the mandate of the City of Hamilton Joint Plaquing Sub-committee to recognize Hamilton sites of architectural, prehistoric and/or historical importance with commemorative plaques. Plaques may be awarded for the following reasons.

**Historical/Prehistoric Importance**
- close association with a noteworthy person (to recognize his/her lasting importance; selected because of his/her association with the place)
- close association with a noteworthy event
- effectively illustrates a significant, broad pattern of cultural, social, political military, economic or industrial history or pre-history
Financial Implications:

Funding for the manufacture, installation and dedication of one commemorative plaque per year resides in the Manager of Culture’s budget allocation.

The Ontario Heritage Trust has approved funding of the Little Africa commemorative plaque to a maximum of $400.00 or 50% of the cost of manufacturing and installation (whichever is less).

Staff Consultation:

Yes  X  No  □

Anna M. Bradford, Manager of Culture and Rebecca Oliphant, Culture Administration Assistant are staff liaisons to the City of Hamilton Joint Plaquesing Sub-committee.
Little Africa

During the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, Canada was a refuge for people seeking freedom from slavery. Escaping slaves came to Hamilton from the United States, by the Underground Railroad.

W.B. Green and the Burkholder families donated land located along the Stone Road, now Concession Street on the sparsely populated Hamilton Mountain, establishing the close-knit community known as Little Africa. The area was bounded by present day Upper Wentworth Street, Concession Street, Upper Sherman Avenue and Fennell Avenue. The settlement developed around ‘The Mission’, a multi-purpose one room building, built in 1860 by Richard Bray, and donated as a school and church to any Protestant denomination.

The winters were harsh and with the difficulty of finding full-time work, many abandoned the colony and resettled elsewhere. Many of those that remained adopted new surnames to avoid tracking and recapture. Some chose the names Johnson, Nelson, Banks, Atkins, Carey, Murdoch, Green and Berry.

By 1865, over 200 Blacks had built homes, planted gardens and found work on farms or with the railway industry. The Berry family maintained the tollgate that stood near the corner of Concession Street and Upper Wentworth. ‘Daddy’ Nelson and Henry Johnson were gravediggers. Many of the Black settlers were buried in unmarked graves in the Burkholder Cemetery.

Hamilton expanded and by the 1920s the descendants of the original Little Africa settlers prospered and moved elsewhere. The community of Little Africa simply faded away.

Hamilton Historical Board  
City of Hamilton  

with the assistance of the Ontario Heritage Trust, 2006.

249 words

Barton on the Mountain, Mabel Burkholder, 1956, p27-29  
Mountain Memories, 2000, p31  
Spectator July 15, 1936  
Spectator July 15, 1946  
Spectator Nov 15, 1947  
Spectator Oct 25, 1984  
Spectator Feb 18, 1993