

Local Actors and Clydesdales Making Television Debut

Photos from the set of *The Book of Negroes*, a CBC TV miniseries filmed in Nova Scotia. Fred Hamilton, and two teams of horses from Lower Onslow, are in the film. (Submitted photos)

By Linda Harrington

Dreams of fame and fortune haven't kept these television stars up at night and don't expect them to be signing autographs anytime soon!

Jean, Prince, Jim and Chase still enjoy their day jobs at Hamilton Sleigh and Wagon Rides, Lower Onslow despite spending a month last spring bumping hooves with celebrities during the filming of the CBC TV mini-series, "The Book of Negroes".

Fred Hamilton trailed

Jean and Prince, a team of Clydesdale horses owned by Benny Cavanaugh, along with his own team, Jim and Chase, to various locations in the province last April during the filming of the CBC mini-series. "We were away a total of 18 days, travelling to Fortress Louisburg, Cole Harbour, Enfield and Shelburne," says Fred.

Fred Hamilton received a call in December of 2013, from Bill Flower, Marine and Animal Co-Ordinator for the film, asking if he would be interested in

using his horses and wagons in the production.

This isn't the first time the horses have been used in films, previously they were used in the movie *Moby Dick*, and Fred knew the pay is good and the horses are treated well, so he jumped at the chance to be involved once again.

"They hire the horses and wagons, plus pay expenses, and I get paid as a Special Skills Extra, so it is worth taking time away from the farm to do this sort of thing," says Fred. "When we filmed in Louisburg, the horses were stabled at the Fortress and we were in Sydney, so it was a 45 minute drive each way, plus 12 hours on set and the horses had to be tended to night and morning, making for very long days."

Fred says he's not sure how much air time the horses will eventually get but they are in a short video clip already posted online. Fred makes a few appearances, as well, although he found it hard to recognize himself under the wig and costumes.

The horses were used to transport the actors in various scenes, with the actors actually taking the reins at times, too. One scene, filmed in Shelburne, shows the horses picking up passengers off a boat in New York City. The horses had to go out onto the narrow dock and Fred says it took several takes. Each time the horses had to be unhitched, and the wagon pulled back, as there was no room to turn them around.

Sometimes the horses were simply parked strategically to provide a backdrop or hide things from view.

"I was very pleased with how the horses behaved through it all," says Fred. "There were loud noises such as live musket fire and blowers from snow making machines but they remained calm throughout."

Early scenes for the film were shot in Africa, where different horses were used. "Apparently those horses didn't know how to back up, so the production company was pleased to be working with our teams of horses, here in Nova Scotia," laughs Fred.

There were different wagons used at various film locations and Fred was able to supply several, in fact he purchased one just for the movie. "I figured they would need a team wooden wheel hay wagon, so I bought one, and it was a good decision," he says.



The *Book of Negroes* airs each Wednesday night on CBC, beginning January 7th at 9PM. If you want to catch up on past episodes they can be viewed on line at

<http://www.cbc.ca/bookofnegroes/episodes/>



A shot of the cameraman as he gets a unique perspective from the driver's point of view at Oakfield Park, near Enfield.



Several wagons were used in production and there was lots of wait time between scenes.



Fred Hamilton, in costume, leading one of the horses from a scene.



This scene, filmed in Shelburne, is actually New York City in the movie.



On location in Fortress Louisburg.



On location in Shelburne during filming of *The Book of Negroes*.



Taking a little break from the stresses of film production, Jim, with Fred at the reins, heads through a Lunenburg drive-thru.

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