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Rose Fortune

Born into slavery in Virginia on the eve of the American revolution, Rose Fortune came north to settle in Nova Scotia at age ten as part of the Black Loyalist migration. Her family settled in Annapolis Royal, Nova Scotia, where she would go on to spend the rest of her life.

In 1825, at age 51, Rose started her own cartage business, which later became known as the Lewis Transfer Company. She carted luggage between the ferry docks and local homes and hotels. She also provided a “wake-up” service to make sure that travelers were awake and ready to go in time for the morning ferry.

Fortune also became the town’s police officer, patrolling the town and the wharf. That made her, it is said, the first female police officer in Canadian history. At a time when neither women nor Black people were encouraged to pursue business, Fortune

started and ran two successful businesses. Over time these businesses became lucrative enough for horse drawn carriages to replace wheelbarrows in the Lewis Transfer Company in 1841. For the next 100 years, Rose Fortune’s children, grandchildren, and descendants would carry on this business.



Rose Fortune’s grave in Annapolis Royal’s Garrison Cemetery is unmarked, but a plaque in the Petit Parc on the town’s waterfront commemorates her life and many contributions to her community. Fortune’s legacy continues to this day, with the Association of Black Law Enforcers having created a scholarship in her name. In 1984, her descendent Daurene Lewis became the first Black female mayor in Canadian history, and in North American

history for that matter. Many of her descendants still work in the shipping and trucking industry, which proves just how much of a legacy Rose Fortune left behind.