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## Portia White

Portia White was born in Truro, Nova Scotia in 1911. She was a school teacher as well as an opera singer. White began singing in the choir in her father's church at the age of six. When she was a child, her family moved to Halifax, where her father Rev. W.A. White served the Cornwallis United Baptist Church. She was teaching school and taking singing lessons by the age of seventeen.

White went on to a silver cup winner at the Nova Scotia Music Festival, soon after receiving a scholarship to the Halifax Conservatory of Music from the Halifax Ladies' Musical Club. She later made a successful debut in Toronto in 1941, followed by other concert appearances. In 1944, she made her New York debut at Town Hall and it received rave reviews. White then toured the United States, Canada, South America, and Europe. The Nova Scotia Government set aside money through the N.S. Talent Trust (provides financial assistance to many outstanding young performers from the province to this day) to ensure that that she would receive top vocal training in 1945.



Portia White became the first black Canadian concert singer to win international recognition. One of the biggest highlights in Ms. White's life was singing before Queen Elizabeth II at the Opening of the Confederation Centre in Charlottetown in 1964.

She died in Toronto in 1968, and in the September of the following year, the Halifax City Regional Library was given a \$1000.00 gift from her estate to help in the purchasing of books and materials on music. Her contribution was a valuable asset to the cultural development of the Halifax region, as well as a living memorial of Portia White's love for music and her native province.

In 1997, the Historic Sites and Monument Board commemorated Ms. Portia White as a national hero. During 1998, the Portia White Prize, a \$25,000 award presented to an outstanding Nova Scotian artist that aspires to excellence in their discipline, was officially announced by the Provincial Arts Council.