**Charles Victor Roman: Surgeon, professor, author and civil rights activist**

**Charles Victor Roman** **(July 4, 1864 – August 25, 1934) was a surgeon, professor, author and civil rights activist born in**[**Williamsport, Pennsylvania**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Williamsport,_Pennsylvania)**and raised in [Dundas, Ontario](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dundas,_Ontario" \o "Dundas, Ontario). He was the first Black person to graduate from Hamilton Collegiate Institute, a high school located in**[**Hamilton, Ontario**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hamilton,_Ontario)**.**[**[1]**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Victor_Roman#cite_note-:0-1)[**[2]**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Victor_Roman#cite_note-:1-2)

Charles Roman was the fourth child of James William Roman and Anne Walker McGuinn.

His father was an enslaved man that escaped to Canada from Maryland via the [Underground Railroad](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Underground_Railroad) and his mother was the daughter of two enslaved Americans who escaped to Canada and later became successful farmers and landowners in [Burford, Ontario](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Burford,_Ontario" \o "Burford, Ontario).[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Victor_Roman#cite_note-:0-1)

US census documents indicate that Charles parents lived in Williamsport, Pennsylvania with their children (which would come to include Charles) sometime before 1860. The census also indicates that James also worked as the captain of a canal boat while living in Pennsylvania.

His parents would move to Burford, Ont in 1870 when Victor was six years old [[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Victor_Roman#cite_note-:0-1) and then later to Dundas, Ontario in 1867 for work opportunities.

Charles, then 12, found work at the Cotton Company, an industrial mill formerly known as the [Cotton Factory](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cotton_Factory) based in Hamilton. Despite being very young, it was legal for children to work in industrial complexes and factories at the time. Charles would often work 12 hour days and then attend night school or supplement his learning with trips to the library when possible.[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Victor_Roman#cite_note-3)

At 17, Roman was injured in a workplace accident at the mill and his leg was amputated.[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Victor_Roman#cite_note-:0-1)[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Victor_Roman#cite_note-:2-4)This accident forced Charles to leave his job, but allowed him to focus on his education. He enrolled in a four-year program at Hamilton Collegiate Institute, which he was able to complete in only two years.

After graduation, Roman found it hard to find gainful employment in his field due to racial discrimination and his disability, so he sold sewing items to save money for medical school. In 1885, a traveling lecturer convinced Charles to use his degree from Hamilton Collegiate Institute and education to find work as a teacher in the U.S. where he could earn more money.

He later moved to [Trigg County, Kentucky](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trigg_County,_Kentucky), and then [Nashville, Tennessee](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nashville,_Tennessee) to teach public school. He intended to save enough money to return to Canada and attend medical school. While teaching, he also took classes at [Meharry Medical College](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meharry_Medical_College" \o "Meharry Medical College) and graduated in 1890.[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Victor_Roman#cite_note-:0-1)[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Victor_Roman#cite_note-:1-2)

After graduating [Meharry Medical College](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meharry_Medical_College" \o "Meharry Medical College) he married his wife Margaret Lee Voorhees and he worked for two years in [Clarksville](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clarksville,_Tennessee). He operated his own private practice in [Dallas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dallas) from 1893 to 1904. He paused his practice to further pursue studies at the Post-Graduate Medical School of Chicago,[[5]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Victor_Roman" \l "cite_note-:3-5) and study [ophthalmology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ophthalmology) and [otorhinolaryngology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Otorhinolaryngology" \o "Otorhinolaryngology) in [London](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/London). He was the first African American physician to train in both of those disciplines. (read more):

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Victor_Roman>