

What's in a Name – Johnson Family – Part 4

The next child of James Sr. and Mary is Francis Ardella Johnson who was born in 1878, but sadly passed away on July 27, 1890 at the age of 12 due to consumption followed by dropsy. Her brother, Harland Ernest, was born in 1881 in Colchester and spent his entire life in the township. He later married Harriet “Hattie” Ruth Holland, who was born in Hamilton and was the daughter of William Holland and Margaret Felson. In the *Amherstburg Echo* Harriet is described as a “shinning example.” She was strongly connected to the A.M.E. Church and “her greatest delight was in spreading the gospel, which she did in both word and song.” According to the *Amherstburg Echo* she had a “contralto voice of exceptionally fine quality and in her long career delighted audiences in many parts of Ontario with her vocal solos.” Interestingly, it was while singing at a concert that Harriet met Harland. Harriet and Harland were married in Windsor but took up residence on the Gore Road in Colchester South. Harriet was a member of the Central Grove A.M.E. Church, but also President of their Missionary Society, Superintendent of the Sunday School and also corresponding secretary of the Ontario Conference of the A.M.E. Church. She even had a certificate as an evangelist from the Moddy Bible Institute and also one from the Boston College of Vitosophy. Harriet also took an active interest in missionary work and loved to teach children about the Bible. Additionally, Harriet enjoyed writing and provided weekly contributions to the *Amherstburg Echo*, discussing things going on in the Black community. Her dedication to this newspaper was appreciated as the *Echo* wrote, “As sure as the week rolled around the budget of news came from her and even in the last few months when she was partly paralyzed, she still felt it her duty to send in the items about her people.” The newspaper also describes her contributions as “among the most valued to come to this desk.”

Sadly, a few days after Harriet passed away, on March 10, 1941, Harland followed on April 3, 1941.

The couple also had several children: Enda Warner (1910), Margaret Elizabeth (August 30, 1915-June 6, 2004), Lloyd (1918), Harland “Zip” (1920-July 7, 2017) and Betty (May 11, 1925-April 4, 2014). Enda married Virgil Grayer, who was the son of Wiley Grayer and Maude Mulder. Virgil also operated Virgil Grayer Trucking Company in Harrow. Edna’s sister, Margaret, married Orville Taylor, the son of James Taylor and Jessie Walls. Margaret was also married to Russell Hurst who passed away in 1984. Margaret, along with her sister Edna were members of the Hattie Johnson Missionary Society and both worked in various jobs like farming, canning and as letter carriers. Edna was also a volunteer midwife. Lloyd married Ruth Anderson, while Harland “Zip” was a farmer and married Dorothy Scott, who was the president of the Hattie Johnson Missionary Society. Harland was also the proud owner of H.W. Johnson & Sons Trucking, a local trucking company that later changed to J&A Johnson Brothers. Harland and Dorothy had five children: Jerry, Tony, Denise, Philip and Ralph.

Harland’s sister Betty Ruth Beatrice Simpson, the co-founder of the Amherstburg Freedom Museum, was born on May 11, 1925 and married twice. Her first marriage was to Burnie Hurst and her second marriage was to Melvin “Mac” Simpson, who founded the museum with Betty. Betty worked at Hotel Dieu Hospital (Windsor Regional Hospital) for 25 years. She began her career as part of the hospital's kitchen staff, later becoming an electro-diagnosis (EEG) technician. Sadly, she passed away on April 4, 2014. Betty’s daughter Joan Patricia Bray continues Betty’s legacy as a Board Director for the Museum. **Thanks for joining us for this month’s edition of our family history series. We hope to see you next month for another installment.**