

## The Clingman Family- Sharing the Story

-Gabriel Clingman Jr. escapes enslavement in 1846 and shares his story in the press and at church gatherings. Read more below.

Gabriel Clingman Jr. was born in Kentucky in 1816 and worked on a plantation located in Greenup County, Kentucky, which enslaved roughly 15 persons. It was in 1846, just before the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, that Gabriel Jr. escaped with his wife Mary Ann Atkinson, 3 children and a few of his cousins. His journey to freedom was documented in the August 27, 1889 edition of the *Grand Rapids Herald*. The article states that “One day Mr. Klingman [sic] was pedaling peaches on a canal boat when the captain asked him if he were a slave. Receiving an affirmative answer the captain asked whether or not he had a wife. Klingman explained that he had a wife and three children. ‘Then why do you not go to Canada where your family will always be safe. Nobody can sell you or any of your family if you go there?’ asked the captain ... I just asked that captain if it was true that people froze and starved there, and if there was so much danger from the bears as we had been told. He said that this was all nonsense as he had been to Canada to see for himself.’ The young slave took the captain at his word and gathering his family and a few friends about him, prepared to travel to Canada by way of the ‘Underground Railway ... One dark night in the summer of 1846, during Polk’s administration and just at the outbreak of the Mexican War, a small party of Negroes crossed the Ohio River in a skiff they called the James K. Polk ..... On the Ohio side, the party sent the skiff adrift and drove off towards Canada in wagons which were waiting for them. At day break, they pulled up to a farm house where the fugitives were concealed until the following evening when the journey was resumed. Traveling at night and hiding in the daytime for a week and a

half brought the fleeing slaves to Sandusky, Ohio, where they were carried by boat to the Canadian shore.”

Interestingly, the *Amherstburg Echo* mentions on December 17, 1897, that “The A.M.E. Zion Sunday school will give a grand Christmas tree and concert on Friday evening, the 24<sup>th</sup> of Dec. There will be a slavery dialogue given by Gabriel Clingman and others.” Clearly, Gabriel continued to share his story for many years until his death a few years later, on March 10, 1900. According to his obituary in the *Amherstburg Echo*, “He settled in Sacksville (Colchester), about 50 years ago, coming there from slavery, and has been a peaceable resident of the township of Colchester South for the half century.” Just a few years earlier, in December 1894, Gabriel’s wife Mary Ann passed away in Colchester.

When Gabriel Jr. escaped with his wife Mary Ann Atkinson in 1846, they brought their three children with them: Ester Ann (b. 1841), James Milton (1843-1894) and Uriah (1845-1911). After reaching Colchester, the couple had eight more children: John (1847-1873), Robert (1850-1923), Obediah (1855-1929), Eraustes (1857-1940), Frances (b. 1858), Mary (b. 1859), Augustus (1859) and William (1863-1884). We will now discuss their eleven children, starting with Esther Ann.

Esther Ann Clingman, the first child of Gabriel Jr. and Mary Ann, was born in 1841 in Greenup County, Kentucky. She married Henry Kirtley, who was born in 1839. The couple had nine children: George (born in 1863), Hiram (1864), James (1867), Lewis (1868), William (1869), Lucy (1870), Ida (1873), Charles (1875) and Judson (1877). No further information was available for George, Hiram, William, Charles or Judson, but there is more to share about Esther’s remaining children: James, Lewis, Lucy and Ida.

James Kirtley, sometimes spelt Curtley in documents, married Adeline Lewis on December 13, 1902. Their marriage record lists James as a labourer and the son of Henry Curtley and Hester (Esther) Clingman, while Adeline's parents are not listed. At the time of their marriage, both James Clingman and Adeline Lewis were previously married and James' brother, Charles Curtley (Kirtley), acted as a witness to the event.

James' other brother, Lewis Kirtley, married Emily Leach, the daughter of Anderson Leach and Mary Ann Day, on February 4, 1891 in Windsor. Lewis was 22 and born in Colchester, while Emily was 20 and born in Sandwich. Lewis was also listed as a sailor on his marriage record.

Next is Lucy Kirtley who married Albert Chambers, a 26-year-old labourer and the son of John Chambers and Christina Morrison. Lucy's sister Ida married James Mulder on June 9, 1889 in Colchester South. James Mulder was born in Colchester South in 1864 and was the son of James and Ellen Mulder. Following her first marriage to James, Ida married a second time to Edward Love on February 28, 1906 in Windsor. Edward was born in Georgia and was the son of Oliver and Mary Love. He worked as a barber and, at the time, they were living in Detroit.

**What we publish is not a complete history of any family and is based on the documents that are available. We welcome photos and information to fill in the gaps. See you next week for part 3.**