

Artis Family Part 2 – Family Physician

Did you know Matthew Artis married Amanda Pearson, whose father established a successful medical practice on George Street in Amherstburg? Read more below.

The family of Matthew Artis, the son of John and Prudence Artis, was among those who relocated from North Carolina and settled in Parke County, Indiana, establishing farms there, but later came to Canada. In 1850, Matthew Artis married Amanda Pearson who was the daughter of Roxanna Jackson and Daniel Pearson. Daniel and Roxanna married in 1841 and in addition to Amanda, the couple had at least three other children: Charles, Lewis, and Jane. Lewis and Charles ran a barber shop in Indianapolis, while Jane married a Mr. Clarke and lived in Indiana.

Amanda's father Daniel Pearson was born circa 1807 in Shelby County, Kentucky and was the son of his "master" Meshack Pearson and an enslaved woman named Charlotte. Charlotte and her son Daniel were manumitted on April 11, 1836 in Shelby, Kentucky. According to Milo Johnson, Daniel had half-siblings and, even after being freed, lived near them, even moving with the Pearson family from Kentucky to Indiana. According to the 1850 census, Daniel is listed as an Innkeeper. Unfortunately, laws in Indiana were becoming even more restrictive forcing African Americans to pay a fee and register themselves with the county clerk in order to control the number of people escaping slavery and settling in Indiana. They even had to have a white person to sponsor them and sign as a witness. Daniel was among this group. He registered as a freeman on November 30, 1854. At this time, he was roughly 50 years old. Daniel did not stop there as he also became a doctor. There are a few explanations as to how he became a physician. The first is that he worked during the Civil War as a surgeon's assistant. The second is that he worked as a coachman for a doctor in Louisville, Kentucky and acquired the knowledge from him.

While living in Amherstburg, Daniel “Doc” Pearson is listed as a nurse and although he was not a legally qualified practitioner, he was able to establish a successful practice on George Street in Amherstburg, after a lot of hard work and study. After Daniel’s passing in 1894, The *Amherstburg Echo* paid tribute to him with the following words: “He was a leading representative of his race and had the respect and esteem of all classes. He took a great interest in everything tending towards the advancement of his own people and has attended every First of August celebration held in the county since he has lived here, and at many was the chairman or principal speaker of the day. He possessed a retentive memory and, being of jovial, kind hearted disposition, was loved by all that knew him.”

Matthew and Amanda Artis had at least four children: Nancy, Cornelius (1855), Joseph (1856), and Henrietta (1858). Matthew and Amanda’s first son, Cornelius, moved with his family to the Colchester area and established himself as a farmer, according to the 1881 census, but in 1910 and 1920 he is listed as a teamster. On October 22, 1878, Cornelius married Theresa A. Bruce, the daughter of Shedrick and Elizabeth Bruce. Cornelius and Theresa had two daughters named Annie and Emma. Sadly, Matthew and Amanda’s next child, Joseph, passed away in 1883 in London, Ontario, while his sister Henrietta married William Hurst, the son of Ransom and Ellen Hurst, in June 1877 in Amherstburg. William and Henrietta had at least two children: Daniel and Maude. There is also a birth record available for an Alonzo Hurst, who was born on August 27, 1885 in Ann Arbor, which lists William and Henrietta Hurst as his parents.

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 where we will share more about Matthew and his second wife Martha.