

## Artis Family Part 4 – Museum Connection

Did you know the Reverend W.T. Artis was a pastor at the Nazrey A.M.E. Church? Read more below.

Another member of the Artis family has a direct connection to the Amherstburg Freedom Museum because, according to the April 20, 1900 edition of the *Amherstburg Echo*, it was the Reverend W.T. Artis who was pastor at the Nazrey A.M.E. Church, where he held Sunday services at 10:30am and 7pm, in addition to Sabbath School at 3pm. In the May 6, 1898 edition of the *Amherstburg Echo*, The Reverend Artis is referred to as “the silver tongued orator” and on separate occasions spoke on subjects such as “Take the little book and eat it up,” “A Risen Saviour” and “Wants and Needs of the Mind.” The church also had the Young People’s Social Club on Wednesday evenings at 7:30pm and prayer meetings every Thursday evening at 8pm.

Interestingly, it was not just the Young People’s Social Club that organized at the A.M.E. Church; other groups gathered, and they have a further connection to the Artis family. For example, Martha Artis was a committee member for the Open Hand Society which hosted events such as Thanksgiving dinners to raise funds for the church and picnics to celebrate the Queen’s birthday. Members of the organization dressed in their uniforms and the program included speeches from J.H. Alexander and W.D. Balfour (MPP). In 1894, Elwood Artis also performed a recitation at the A.M.E. Church on New Year’s night which included a tree and entertainment such as a “duet by little Miss Mabel and Master Georgie McCurdy, Miss Almeida Johnson sang ‘O Food Dove’ very acceptably, and was encored again and again. D.R. Davis gave a short appropriate address, and a duet by Miss Johnson and Miss Bertha Wesley closed the programme. Proceeds \$7.25.”

In 1898, the *Amherstburg Echo* reported that the Frederick Douglas Self Improvement Club was established by Mrs. Mary Roberts Tate for the young ladies of Amherstburg. Their motto was “Lifting As We Climb” and among its officers were: Miss Lena Anderson, President; Miss Ella Holt, Vice President; Miss Dora Artis, Secretary; Miss Amy Goodrich, Treasurer; Misses Emma Holt and Lucretia Anderson. Programme Committee: Mrs. E.J. Artis, Instructor. The club alternated residences for their meetings on Tuesday evenings and occasionally met at the residence of the Rev. W.F. Artis. Their programs consisted of activities such as singing and instrumental music, recitation, composition and debate on topics such as “Which is the most attractive to the eye, paint and powder or human nature?” A few weeks later it was reported that nature won the debate.

Members of the Frederic Douglass Self-Improvement Club performed these activities because they were expected to advance themselves in both moral and academic pursuits. For example, at one meeting on November 15, 1898, Dora Artis, the club secretary, recited an essay that asked “How shall we raise the standard of morality among our young ladies?” On separate occasions she wrote “A Sketch of Shakespeare’s life,” “Gladstone’s favourite Hymns,” and “General Rules to Govern Conduct.” Dora Artis was active in this group until January 24, 1899 when she resigned with the following letter: “To the members of the Frederic Douglass Self-Improvement Club. I the undersigned wish to tender my resignation as secretary & member of the Club. Yours respectively [sic], Dora Artis.”

The Frederic Douglass Self-Improvement Club also offered those in attendance a respectable form of entertainment in an appropriate environment. At one of their receptions the guest list included attendees such as Tempy Artis and David Artis, and they along with other

participants were, no doubt, under the watchful eye of their guest speakers, Deacon Jones and the Reverend W.J. Artis.

**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 another amazing family history.**