

## **Parker Family Part 1 – Sharing Memories**

At our recent Emancipation Celebration Dinner and Dance we honoured the late Alton C. Parker with our Legacy Hero Award. Because of this, we thought it was only fitting to highlight Alton and the Parker family in this month's family history series. A big thank you to Dianne Steele-Ber, Cherie Steele-Sexton and Lynda Johnson-Smith for generously sharing information on their family members.

Alton Parker was the son of Ida M. Joiner and Immanuel/Emmanuel Crawford Parker who was born at the corner of McDougall and Wyandotte Street in 1865. According to Immanuel and Ida's marriage record from January 2, 1896, Immanuel Crawford was the son of Crawford Parker, but his mother is not listed. The same occurs for Ida's parents because her father is listed as "Joiner" and mother is "unknown." At the time of their marriage, Ida was 21 and living in Detroit, while Immanuel Crawford Parker is listed as 30 and a labourer living in Windsor. The couple married in Detroit. Sadly, Immanuel's parents passed away from smallpox when he was five years old. It was his grandmother who raised him until he was nine years old. It was then that Immanuel went to live with his Aunt America Jones and his Uncle Henry on Mercer Street.

Immanuel and Ida had seven children: Josephine Ardaina (1896), Earl Crawford (1898), Gladys Irene (1899), Madeline Mae (1902), Wilfred Lorenzo (1905/1906), Alton (1907) and Esther (1909). Immanuel and Ida also took in three infants and cared for them. Josephine married Earl H. Fields on June 17, 1922 in Detroit. According to their marriage record, Earl was the son of Jeff Fields and Ada Price, and Earl worked as a stockman. Josephine and Earl had two children: Earl Emanuel Fields, also known as 'Pete' and their daughter named Alice Ida (Fields) Stark.

Josephine's brother Earl Crawford Parker, the next child of Immanuel and Ida, was born in February 1898, but sadly passed away at the young age of 29. His death record lists him as single with no occupation.

Earl's sister Gladys married Cyrus Lanson Van Dyke who was born on October 28, 1898 and was the son of Cyrus Van Dyke, a labourer from Dresden, and Mary Kersey. At the time of their marriage, Lanson worked for the Ford Motor Company, but he also worked as the Assistant Market Clerk for the City of Windsor. Gladys was also the historian of the First Baptist Church in Windsor, but also the President of the church's missionary society, secretary of the Sunday School and the head of the Home and School Parent Teacher Association at Mercer Street School. Gladys and Lanson's children include Helen Mae (Van Dyke) Johnson, Anna Lavina (Van Dyke) Sims, Margy Imogene (Van Dyke) Shreve, Joyce Caroline (Van Dyke) Harris, Lanson David Van Dyke, Esther Hazel (Van Dyke) Nolan, and Jacqueline Rosemary Van Dyke, who sadly passed at six months old.

Helen Johnson worked for Revenue Canada for 19 years, while Imogene was home schooled during her early years and later graduated from the Flemming School of Cosmetology in Detroit, Michigan. Lanson David was a master mechanic and mentored many apprentices before retiring from Kipping Firestone in 2010. He also has a connection to the museum because his son David (married to Mon Yee) is a Board Director of the Amherstburg Freedom Museum. David's siblings include Laurie (married to Karzell Dew), Shelly (Peter Wickett), Barb (Peter Richardson), Brock (Michelle) and Grant (Vanessa). Lanson's sister Esther worked for Canada Man Power in Toronto for five years before transferring to the Windsor office.

Gladys' sister Madeline married Hermett H. Wortham and had two children: Dr. Parker W. Wortham, who was a dentist in Detroit, and a daughter, Esther Jean (Wortham) Roberts, who

was a school teacher. Her husband the Reverend Dr. Joseph L. Roberts served as the Senior Pastor of the Historic Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, Georgia for 30 years. Did you know in 1960, the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. served as co-pastor at this church with his father, the Rev. Martin Luther King Sr. Martin Luther King Jr. remained in that position until 1968 when he was assassinated. Following the Rev. Martin Luther King Sr.'s retirement in 1975, Dr. Joseph L. Roberts Jr. became the church's fourth Senior Pastor.

Madeline Parker Wortham, at one time, worked for the YWCA, but also as an office manager and secretary at Bethel A.M.E. Church in Detroit for 35 years. After retiring from the church, she managed her son's dental office for five years. Madeline's husband Hermett Wortham worked as a postal clerk in Detroit, but the 1930 US Census also lists his occupation as railway porter. The 1930 Census also lists Madeline and Hermett as living with Hermett's mother, Anna M. Hermett (widowed), whose home, as shown in the census, was worth \$15,000.

Madeline's brother, Wilfred Lorenzo Parker, was born on December 17, 1905, but sadly passed away a few months later on March 1, 1906 due to whooping cough and pneumonia. Wilfred's sister Esther was born on August 31, 1909, but sadly passed away at the age of 20 from pulmonary tuberculosis. According to her death record, Esther was single and worked as a stenographer.

**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 2.**