

The Brooks Family Part 1- A Faithful Volunteer

Over the years, the Museum has had countless volunteers who have given their time and energy to ensure that Mac and Betty's dream of sharing Black History with the world lived on. One such volunteer is the late Giovanna Brooks Johnson. From the opening of the museum to the end of her life, Giovanna was a devoted supporter of the museum and we are grateful to her for her efforts. As a tribute to Giovanna, this month's family history will highlight members of the Brooks family.

We begin with Jonathan Brooks Sr. who married Francy "Fannie" Holmes in 1836 at the Regular Baptist Church in Gosfield Township. According to the 1871 Tax Assessment rolls, Jonathan owned 30 acres of land, 10 of which were cleared and cultivated. The couple had four children: Jonathan McNab Jr. (1842), Angeline (1847), Mary (1854), and Amelia "Milly" Ann (1857). Jonathan and Francy, along with two children, Jonathan and Angeline, are listed on the 1851 Census, but ten years later, in 1861, Jonathan but not Francy is listed with all four of their children: Angeline, Mary, Jonathan and Amelia. Jonathan Sr. is also listed as a widower, meaning that Francy passed away some time between 1851 and 1861. The following 1871 census lists John Brooks and three of his daughters Angeline, Mary and Milly (Amelia).

Angeline never married and lived on the family homestead until her death in 1887. No information was available for Angeline's sister Mary, but Amelia went on to marry George Andrew Kirtley. Amelia and George had at least two children: Le Roy and John Harley Kirtley who was born on September 26, 1890. A record for WWI Veterans in Michigan lists Le Roy's military service beginning on October 27, 1917 at Camp Custer in Detroit. He served in the 367th Buffalo Division as a Private. Le Roy's parents are listed as Andy Kirtley and Millie

Brooks Kirtley, while Le Roy's wife is listed as Blanche Ross who was born on November 29, 1896 in Orange, NJ.

Jonathan and Francys's son, Jonathan McNab Jr., married Harriet Griggs, the daughter of Peter Griggs and Maude Peters. Jonathan and Harriet lived on the family farm on Lot 8 of the 3rd Concession. According to his 1915 obituary, Jonathan "was an honest, straightforward citizen whom everyone spoke well of." Harriet's obituary also reveals details of her life. It says she "was a native of Virginia, and came to Colchester when a child with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Griggs. Here she married Johnathan Brooks, a well-known citizen of his day, who died four years ago. Of a large family of fifteen children only four are living – Lizzie, Mrs. Clingman, Detroit; Barbara, at home; Walter, of Colchester South, and Della, Mrs. Henry Harris of Colchester South."

As mentioned in Harriet's obituary, she and Jonathan had fifteen children. We were able to identify ten: Elizabeth, Charlotte (1867), Francis (1869), Barbara (1870), Walter (1871), Levi (1872), Letitia (1874), Amanda (1879), Millia (1880), and Adelle "Della"(1883). Elizabeth married Eraustes Clingman, who was born in 1857, the same year as Elizabeth, in Colchester South. Eraustes and Elizabeth had two children: Frederick Emanuel Clingman and William G. Clingman who was born in 1890. Frederick Emanuel was born on June 3, 1886 in Colchester South and married Nora D. Jackson (born circa 1887 in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia). Frederick and Nora had 6 children: Montrose, Howard, Alfreda, Clara, Juanita and Winola.

Charlotte also married into the Clingman family. She married Augustus Clingman, the son of Gabriel Clingman and Mary Ann Atkins, on June 1, 1888 in Colchester South. When you consult the Clingman family history at amherstburgfreedom.org you will learn that Augustus was

born on April 3, 1859 in Colchester South and he and Charlotte had three children: Alfred Clingman (born on June 3, 1884 in Colchester South); Garnet Clingman (born on August 15, 1888) and Dessie Clingman (born on December 4, 1895 in Colchester South).

Jonathan and Harriet's next child was Francis (born 1869). On March 2, 1887, she married Henry Lewis, the son of Peter and Mary Lewis, and the couple lived on a farm in Colchester. The 1891 Census lists Francis and her husband Henry Lewis along with their daughter Mary E. who was 2 years old at the time. According to the records, Francis' sister Barbara, who was born circa 1870, never married and lived at home with her parents, Jonathan and Harriet.

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.