

The Foster Family Part 2 – Continuing in the Family Business

A few years after Sarah passed, in 1902, George H. passed away which is recorded in the *Amherstburg Echo*. The article says, “A very sudden death, of a citizen of this township, occurred Monday evening last, on the quarry road, when George H. Foster passed away without, so far as is known, a moment’s warning. Mr. Foster had been in Amherstburg that day and on returning home went about his chores. Later he was driving a hog along the quarry road and it is supposed that he became worried following the animal, bringing on a sudden attack of heart failure, he having been troubled for some time with heart disease, and he dropped on the road, never apparently having moved again. When the children came from school they found the house locked and the neighbors became alarmed at Mr. Foster’s absence for the man was always very punctual, and a number of them went out to search for him. In the meantime the body had been found by the Powers’ boys, who reported same to coroner Hobley. An order was given for its removal and it was taken to the house. The death has caused a profound sensation among the people of the section and in Amherstburg where deceased was well known. He was a most kind hearted man and was always showing little kindnesses to his friends. He was born in the State of Ohio, July 3rd, 1838, so was 64 years of age last July. With his parents he came to Amherstburg, when he was but an infant. His father, the late Levi Foster, kept livery stable in Amherstburg on Apsley street for many years. There was a large family, five of whom are left. They are: - Levi, of Wisconsin; Elizabeth, of Los Angeles, Cal.; Mrs. Jacobs, of the same place; besides two half brother, John, of Amherstburg; Thos. Of Biggar City, Oregon, and a half sister, Mrs. Annie Hyatt, of Windsor.”

The obituary continues saying, “On May 6th, 1875 the deceased was married to MISS SARAH J. SMITH, in Amherstburg. They lived there for a few years and then moved to Malden,

on the farm next to the cemetery. They had eight children, seven of whom are living. They are: George H. of Cleveland; Waring, Smith, Maud, Evelyn, Madeline and Sarah, at home. Mrs. Foster died three years ago last March. Since that time Mr. Foster had remained at home and attended to the farm. Previous to that he had been a steward on some of the larger liners. He was a member of a Masonic Lodge in Cleveland and a member of the First Baptist Church, Amherstburg.”

After George H.’s passing several of his children were sent to live with their Aunt Gertrude Smith Bush, wife of William H. Bush and sister of Sarah Smith Foster (George H.’s wife). Gertrude and William married circa 1888 and the couple had no children. Additionally, Gertrude was active in the community, particularly as a member of the First Baptist Church for more than sixty years, a member of the Ladies Sewing Circle and the Ladies Missionary Society.

George H. and Sarah’s sons followed in the footsteps of their father and worked as cooks in the shipping industry. The August 3, 1900 edition of the *Amherstburg Echo* states that George and Sarah’s son, George H. Jr. worked on the steamer ‘Iron Chief’ while in the December 21, 1900 edition it says Waring Foster, was “among the arrivals home from sailing this week.” Within the Great Lakes Fleet, there were few jobs available to Black Canadians, but some members of the Foster family rose to the level of 1st Steward.

George H. Jr. married Florence Isabelle Dunjill and the *Amherstburg Echo* describes their wedding which took place on Christmas night in 1901, adding that “The decorations were appropriate to the Christmas season. After the ceremony a reception was held at the bride’s home and the happy couple left that night for their wedding trip to Canada. They expect to make

Cleveland their future home. The bride's maids were Miss Addie Hackley and Miss Florence Wilson. The groomsmen were J.E. Dunjill and J.G. Robinson.”

Next is George H. Jr.'s sister, Maud. She married Charles L. Jones who was the son of Leander Jones of Anderdon. On December 22, 1911, the *Amherstburg Echo* printed a brief account of their wedding which says “A very quiet and pretty wedding was solemnized last Tuesday afternoon, when Rev. Allan Peavy using the ring service, united in marriage Miss Maud Foster, eldest daughter of the late Geo. H. Foster, and Charles L. Jones, son of the late Leander Jones, of Anderdon. The bride was daintily attired in white ... and was attended by her sister, Mrs. Evelyn Foster McCurdy, who was also in white. H.W. Foster served as best man. Those present were the immediate relatives of both families, the out-of-town guests being Mrs. Louisa F. Jacobs, of Los Angeles, Cal.; Mrs. George H. Foster, of Cleveland, Ohio; Mrs. Leroy N. McCurdy and son Foster, of Conneaut, Ohio, and Philo G. Smith, of Waynesburg, Pa. The bride was the recipient of many handsome and useful presents. Mr. and Mrs. Jones will be at home to their friends at his mother's home in Anderdon for the present.”

Maud's sister Madeline married Dr. John E. Murrell and the couple had a daughter named Marilyn. Madeline and John's marriage is recounted in the September 22, 1922 edition of the *Amherstburg Echo* and says “The residence of Mr. and Mrs. P.W. Lemon, 2330 E. 55th street, Cleveland, was the scene of a quiet but very pretty wedding on the evening of September 2nd, when Mrs. Madeline E. Lightfoot, third daughter of the late George H. Foster, of Malden, and John E. Murrell were united in marriage by Rev. E.A. Clarke of St. John's A.M.E. church. ‘O Promise Me’ was sweetly rendered by Madame Grace Willis Thompson, followed by the Mendelssohn wedding march, played by Miss Marguerite Sanford. The bride was beautifully attired in white crepe romaine trimmed with satin and lace and carried a shower bouquet of white

rosebuds. A string of pearls and lilies of the valley in her hair were the only ornaments. The ceremony was performed amid a profusion of gladioli and palms and Philo S. Foster, brother of the bride gave her in marriage. During the reception, Harry Thompson sang several selections. Mr. and [Mrs.] Murrell were the recipients of many lovely gifts in silver, cut glass, china, linen and mahogany.”

According to her 1946 obituary, Madeline received her degree in education at Western Reserve University and retired from the Cleveland Public School Board after dedicating over thirty years to the profession. It adds that she was a member of the St. John’s A.M.E. Church, Alpha Kappa Alpha National Sorority and was also a long-time and active member of the League of Women Voters.

Madeline’s husband is also praised in the September 5, 1930 edition of the *Amherstburg Echo* which writes “Graduate of Our High School” - “The Editor of The *Echo* was glad to meet on the grounds of the Canadian National Exhibition, at Toronto, on Press Day, Friday last, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Jones and to learn how well Mr. Jones is getting along. He will be remembered as a native of Anderdon, who after graduating from the public and high schools here passed through the normal school and taught for a few years in Ontario. He then entered Queen’s university and graduated from that institution after a very creditable course, and is now mathematical teacher on the staff of one of the largest high schools in Toronto. Mrs. Jones is the eldest daughter of the late George Foster. Mr. and Mrs. Jones are a frugal pair, have saved their money, and are just completing a nice new home in Toronto. The products of this district certainly do make good out in the world in competition with the best of them.”

Madeline’s obituary mentions that her sister Sarah Maria Foster married into the Lee family and lived in Cleveland, Ohio. With further research, we discovered Sarah’s marriage

certificate which says that she married James Reynolds Lee of Cleveland, Ohio, on October 19, 1914 in Amherstburg. James was the son of John L. Lee and Susan Reynolds. Their marriage record also reveals that Sarah worked as a stenographer, while James Reynolds Lee was a dentist.

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.