

Simpson Family History (James' Line) Part 4 – “An old house that’s the basis of a dream”

Jerome Simpson is the last child of James and Matilda (Brooks) Simpson to be discussed. Jerome or ‘Rome’ married Mabel McCurdy, the daughter of George McCurdy and Mary Thomas, on June 30, 1905 in Amherstburg. Mabel’s mother Mary Thomas was married first to George McCurdy and second to Amherstburg lawyer Fred H.A. Davis, the son of the third Black lawyer in Canada, Delos Davis. According to Mary’s obituary, “Mary A. Thomas Davis, widow of Fred H.A. Davis, died at her home on Sandwich Street, Tuesday, in her 86th year. Mrs. Davis was a daughter of George and Maria Buckner Thomas. She was born in the old Haiti Settlement in Anderdon and had lived in Amherstburg for 75 years. Mrs. Davis was a member of A.M.E. Church of Amherstburg and of Ruth Chapter of the Eastern Star. Her husband a prominent Amherstburg barrister, died in 1926. Surviving are two sons George D. McCurdy of Amherstburg and Leroy N. McCurdy of White Plains, N.Y., and a daughter Mable, Mrs. Rome Simpson of Amherstburg. She also leaves three brothers, Philip and Robert Thomas of Oberlin, Ohio and Daniel Thomas of Cleveland; 14 grandchildren and 31 great grandchildren. The funeral will be from her late residence to the B.M.E. Church Friday afternoon at two o’clock with Rev. I.H. Edwards officiating. Six grandsons will be pallbearers for the burial in Rose Hill Cemetery.”

There is also an interesting story that further connects Mary to the Amherstburg Freedom Museum, in addition to being the grandmother of the Museum’s founder, Mac Simpson. In the Museum’s collection is a story about a rocking chair that is on display in the Taylor Cabin. It says “Mary Davis would sit in her rocking chair and smoke a corncob pipe. Mac often went to babysit over there and he told his mother he would not like to go there often because Mary’s house was haunted. The house which has been moved away was at the corner of Richmond and Sandwich on the east side near Richmond Nursing home. Mac’s mother was called Mabel McCurdy.”

Mabel McCurdy was born on March 14, 1888 and her birth record states that her father George worked as a Mariner at the time. The obituaries for Mabel and Jerome also share further details of their life. Mabel's 1964 obituary from the *Amherstburg Echo* also records "SIMPSON – Mable Edith (nee McCurdy), 76 years, April 18, 1964, at late residence, 212 King St., Amherstburg. Beloved wife of late Jerome Simpson (1954). Dear mother of Mrs. John (Dorothy) Dwelle, Wilfred and Everett, Detroit; Mrs. Vincent (Corinne) Bryant, Hamilton; Mrs. Burton (Kathleen) Clemons, Bakersfield, Calif.; Melvin (Mac), Windsor. Dear sister of Roy McCurdy, White Plains, N.Y., and George McCurdy, Amherstburg; 10 grandchildren, eight great-grandchildren. Resting at the late residence from Tuesday afternoon until Wednesday noon thence to the Nazrey A.M.E. Church until time of service, 2 p.m., Rev. L.O. Jenkins officiating."

According to Jerome's obituary from September 9, 1954 "Jerome 'Rome' Simpson, 71, of 212 King, Amherstburg, a lifelong resident of Amherstburg, died last Thursday at Grace Hospital following a lengthy illness. Mr. Simpson was employed by the Bob-Lo Excursion Company for 55 years and was well known around the island. He was the son of the late James and Matilda Simpson. Surviving are his widow, the former Mabel E. McCurdy: three sons, Wilfred J. and Everett G., of Detroit and Melvin T. (Mac) of Windsor: three daughters, Mrs. John Dwelle (Dorothy), Detroit, Mrs. Vincent Bryant (Corrine), Hamilton, and Mrs. Burton Clemons (Kathleen), of China Lake, Calif.; one brother, Oswald of Amherstburg; two sisters, Mrs. Carrie Banks and Mrs. Henry M. Marbly (Mamie), both of Detroit; also 10 grandchildren. Rev. I.H. Edwards officiated at the funeral Sunday afternoon in the B.M.E. Church and burial was in Rose Hill Cemetery."

If you have ever visited the Amherstburg Freedom Museum, you may have noticed a white house next door. This house is also significant to the Simpson family history as it was the

home of Jerome, Mabel, and their children including Mac who also lived in that house with his wife Betty. In the article “An old house that’s the basis of a dream” it says Mac’s “own home is more that 145 years old with hand-hew logs supporting the ceilings. It was to this house that his parents moved in 1908. Although both his parents had been born in the neighborhood they encountered opposition to the move. ‘Area residents didn’t want a black man to move in but my Dad was determined to stay even if he had to lick everyone on the block to do so.’”

Jerome and Mabel had several children in addition to Melvin, who will be discussed further later, including Dorothy (b. August 19, 1905 and m. John Dwelle); Wilfred (b. November 27, 1906 and m. Odessa Campbell); Everett (b. January 26, 1910 and m. Dorothy Williams); Corinne (b. February 12, 1912 and m. Vincent Bryant); Melvin, and Kathleen (b. May 10, 1914 and m. Burton H. Clemens). There is also mention of another child named Sheldon, but that he passed away at a young age.

As mentioned, Dorothy married John Dwelle on June 16, 1928 in Amherstburg. According to the couple’s marriage announcement from June 1928 “A very pretty wedding was solemnized Saturday evening, June 16th, at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Jerome Simpson, King street, Amherstburg, when their eldest daughter, Dorothy May, was united in marriage to John Dwelle, of Detroit. The ceremony was performed in the drawing room, which was beautifully decorated for the occasion with a canopy of palms and flowers, and the service was performed by the Rev. Dr. T.H. Henderson, of Toronto. The bride, who was given away by her father, looked charming in a dress of white georgette, trimmed with silver, and wearing the regulation veil. She carried a bouquet of white carnations. Her bridesmaid, Miss Belle Dwelle, sister of the groom, wore a dress of peach satin, carrying a bouquet of pink carnations. The bride was preceded by Corinne Simpson and Esther Dwelle, who acted as flower girls. The groom was

assisted by Rodney Ravarro, of Detroit. The wedding music was played by Professor C. McCallum; Immediately following the ceremony a reception was held, after which Mr. and Mrs. Dwelle left for Detroit, the bride travelling in a blue georgette.”

Their children included John Jr., Jerome, Donald, Jack, and Gerald. According to the “Michigan, Eastern and Western Districts, Naturalization Records” for Dorothy May Simpson Dwelle, it states that John was born in Detroit, Michigan on September 8, 1929; Jerome was born on February 10, 1931 in Hamtramck, Michigan and served in the U.S. Air Force; Donald was born on March 29, 1935 in Detroit, Michigan; and Jack and Gerald (twins) were born on October 15, 1942 in Detroit. This record also lists the date of birth for Dorothy’s husband John who was born in Augusta, Georgia on December 12, 1905.

According to Jack’s marriage record, he married Doris Alexander, the daughter of James Alexander and Fannie Pearson, on November 12, 1981 in Toledo, Ohio. This record lists Jack as being a ‘Manager’ and born in 1942, while Doris was born circa 1950. Jack’s brother Jerome, according to his death record from July 5, 1991, states that he lived in Sonoma, California and was born on February 10, 1931 in Michigan.

Dorothy’s brother Wilfred is the next child of Jerome and Mabel that will be discussed. He married Odessa Campbell and they had a son named Robert who married Gladys. According to the “Michigan, Eastern and Western Districts, Naturalization Records” for Wilfred Jerome Simpson, he was born on November 27, 1906 in Amherstburg and, at the time, worked as a truck driver. This record also states that Wilfred and Odessa were married on July 10, 1929 in Windsor, and that Odessa was born in Chatham on September 29, 1906. Also stated is their son Robert’s date of birth which was August 18, 1931.

Wilfred's brother Everett, according to his birth record, was born on January 26, 1910 in Amherstburg. The *Amherstburg Echo* records "At the rectory of St. Peter Clovett Church, Detroit, Saturday, August 4th, 1934, Everett Simpson, son of Mr. Jerome Simpson, Amherstburg, to Miss Dorothy Williams, daughter of Mr. Wallace S. Williams, of Detroit." Everett and Dorothy had a son named Everett Jr. The "Michigan, Eastern and Western Districts, Naturalization Record" for Everett Simpson also states that he was born on January 26, 1910 in Amherstburg, and he worked as a Porter. It also states that Everett and Dorothy were married on August 4, 1934 in Detroit, and that Dorothy (spelt Dorothea in the record) was born in Detroit on June 27, 1909. This is in addition to listing the date of birth for Everett Jr., who was born on September 25, 1939 in Detroit.

The next child of Jerome and Mabel Simpson is Corinne who was born on February 12, 1912 in Amherstburg. She married Vincent Bryant of Hamilton, and the *Amherstburg Echo* records details of their wedding which says "A quiet wedding took place at the home of the bride, Saturday afternoon, September 3rd, when Vincent S. Bryant, postman at Hamilton, son of Mr. and Mrs. James Bryant, Hamilton, was united in marriage to Miss Corrinne Simpson, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Jerome Simpson, Amherstburg. The bride was given away by her father, Rev. T.H. Henderson, D.D., Toronto, officiating. They were attended by Reginald Bryant, brother of the groom and Miss Fern Harrison, both of Hamilton. The bride was charmingly dressed in a travelling dress of dark maroon, trimmed with white silk and hat to match, carrying a beautiful bouquet of pink roses. The bride's maid of honor wore a green violet trimmed with lace and wore a black hat, and carried a bouquet of red roses and white asters. Miss Florence Kirtley played the wedding march and was accompanist to her sister, Frances Kirtley, who sang very sweetly a solo, 'I Love You Truly.' The home was artistically decorated with choice

flowers and ferns. A dainty luncheon was served, after which the young couple left for Hamilton where they will reside. The bride was the recipient of many useful and handsome gifts.” The couple also had two children named Vincent and Corrine (Chevalier).

Corinne’s sister Kathleen is up next. She married Burton Clemons of China Lake, California who was an electrical engineer and the son of Isaiah Clemens. Burton and Kathleen married on June 10, 1948. The *Amherstburg Echo* shared details of their wedding and said “The marriage of Miss Kathleen Simpson, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Jerome Simpson of Amherstburg, to Mr. Burton H. Clemens, son of Mr. and Mrs. Isaiah Clemens of Bakersfield, California, was solemnized at Napoleon, Ohio, on June tenth. On June twelfth at high noon at the residence of the bride’s parents, the wedding procession was carried out as planned. Melvin T. Simpson, the bride’s brother, sang ‘Because.’ The bride wore a gown of pastel pink silk jersey, a shoulder length pink tulle veil with pink rosebuds, and a corsage of pink tea roses. Her sister Mrs. John Dwelle wearing turquoise blue silk crepe and gold accessories and corsage of pale pink tea roses, was matron of honor. Mrs. Vincent Bryant wearing yellow silk jersey and white accessories and corsage of Talisman roses was bridesmaid. The bride’s brother Everett G. Simpson acted as best man. The bridal party stood under a canopy of white, with a background of ferns and roses. Rev. J.D. Howell of Detroit gave the marriage his blessing. The bride’s mother wore green sheer print mesh and a corsage of Talisman roses. Her grandmother Mrs. Mary Davis had a gray silk print and a corsage of roses. Many out-of-town guests attended from Cleveland, Grand Rapids, New York, Detroit, Windsor and Hamilton. Mr. and Mrs. Clemens left Friday, and are motoring to California where they will make their home. Mr. Clemens is employed by the United States Government as an electrical engineer.”

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 5 where we will discuss Melvin ‘Mac’ Simpson.