

## **The Dennis Family History Part 1 – From South Carolina to Essex County**

This month's family history highlights the Dennis family beginning with Peter Dennis. The 1861 Census lists Peter with his wife Margaret and their children John, Mary, James, Enoch, Margaret, and Robert. According to his death record, Peter passed away on March 25, 1894, in Colchester at the age of 81. His obituary from April 6, 1894, which appeared in the *Amherstburg Echo* shares further details and says "Peter Dennis, who died on Sunday of last week, aged 81 years, was born in South Carolina in 1813. He came to Canada about 40 years ago, and resided in Essex Co., until his death. He was married 57 years ago to Margaret Rouse, of South Carolina, who survives him along with six children – John W., Mrs. Mary E. Johnston, James W., Enoch W., and Robert M., of Colchester South and Mrs. Margaret A. Crosby of Detroit, Mich. Deceased has been a member of the church for the past thirty years. He has been in poor health for the past 7 or 8 years but was not confined to his bed until Thursday before his death. The funeral took place Tuesday afternoon of last week from the family residence to the A.M.E. Church, Central Grove. Rev. G.D. Pope and Rev. Mr. Brown officiated and the pall bearers were Anthony Banks, M. Banks, L. Sawyer, Henry Harris, Henry Graham and Washington Hurst." A further note about Margaret. The 1891 Census states that she was born July 15, 1824.

Peter and Margaret's first child, John Dennis, was born circa 1839 and he married Henrietta Crosby. He is listed in the 1871 Census along with his wife Henrietta and their children Charles, Louisa and Alice. There were additional documents listing more children including Alzora/Azora and another unnamed child that sadly passed away at only 18 days on March 26, 1894. This child's passing is mentioned in the *Amherstburg Echo* because he passed at the same time as his grandfather, Peter. The *Echo* says "Mr. Dennis, one of the township's oldest settlers died on Saturday and was buried on Tuesday, at the same time his grandson, a child of John

Dennis, was buried.” According to the 1881 Census, John had another child named Alzora/Azora. John and Azora are listed in the same household as John’s parents Peter and Margaret. In the next Census for 1891 John is still living with his parents, but Azora is not listed. This is because she married Gordon Day, the son of Samuel Day and Sarah Hunt (I think this is meant to say Hurst). The 1871 Census reveals the names of some of Gordon’s siblings which include Charles, John, Georgeanna, Fanny and Joseph. Gordon and Alzora married on January 15, 1891, in Detroit.

There was no additional information for John’s other daughters Louisa and Alice, but several documents were found for John’s son Charles. He married Henrietta Harris, the daughter of Ebert and Henrietta Harris, on January 28, 1882, in Colchester. According to the *Amherstburg Echo* “In Harrow ‘Trinity’ B.M.E. Church, on Saturday, January 28<sup>th</sup>, by the Rev. W.H. Haynes, Mr. Charles Dennis of Pleasant Valley, to Henrietta, youngest daughter of Mr. Ebert Harris, of the same place, in Colchester South.” The 1891 Census lists Charles with his wife Henrietta and their children Alexander, Burwell, Jessie and Edith. The 1910 Census lists Charles and wife Henrietta with children Charles A. (likely Alexander because their ages match), Edith and Minnie. According to her death record, Minnie E. Dennis passed away on March 30, 1936, in Detroit at the age of 42. This record also states that she was born on May 11, 1893, in Colchester and was a widow, but the name of her husband is not listed. According to his death record, Minnie’s father Charles passed away on January 24, 1932, in Nankin, Wayne, Michigan. This record also states that he was born on December 8, 1862, and was a widower.

Charles’ father John William Dennis passed away on November 17, 1926, in Washtenaw, Michigan at the age of 88. His death record states that he was a widower and born on April 6, 1838 in Abbeyville, South Carolina. His obituary which appeared in the *Amherstburg Echo* on

November 26, 1926, states “John William Dennis departed this life on Wednesday, November 17, at the ripe age of 86 years, at the home of his niece, Mrs. James DeBaptist, at Ypsilanti, Mich. He was for many years a resident of Colchester South. He is survived by one brother, James Walter Dennis, of Detroit; one son, Charles Sumner Dennis, Detroit; four grandchildren, one great granddaughter, and a number of nieces and nephews. His remains were deposited in Fair View cemetery, Ann Arbor, Mich.”

**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.**