

### **Stokes Family Part 3 – A Separate School in Anderdon**

William's sister Lucinda, the next child of Peter Stokes and Mary Ann Robinson, will be discussed next. She married Franklin Tolbet (some sources say Talbot), the son of Reuben Tolbet, on January 4, 1882 in Amherstburg. Sadly, Lucinda passed away on February 11, 1884 at the age of 23 in Anderdon. Although Lucinda was long passed at this point, the 1901 Census lists Lucinda's mother Mary A. Stokes with her grandson Frank Talbot who was 18 years old. He was born before Lucinda passed away, lives with Lucinda's mother and shares the same last name as Lucinda's husband so all conclusions lead to Frank being Lucinda's child.

Lucinda's brother Henry also died at a young age. He passed on December 28, 1883 in Anderdon at the age of 19. At the time, Henry worked as a sailor. Both Lucinda and Henry passed due to consumption. Their sister Mary Stokes married Porter Kelly. The couple had at least four sons: Andrew, Alfred, Willie and Edward. Andrew was born on November 19, 1891 in Sandwich West, while Andrew's brother Alfred passed away on September 18, 1930 in Ann Arbor, Michigan. At the time he was single and 37 years old. His death record also says that Alfred was born on April 5, 1893. Alfred's brother Willie was born on September 12, 1894 in West Sandwich Township and Edward was born on July 13, 1897 in Anderdon. Sadly, Edward passed away a few days after he was born. Mary Stokes Kelly must have married a second time because her death record lists her as Mary Johnson, daughter of Peter Stokes and Mary A. Robinson. Mary (Stokes) Kelly Johnson passed away on November 17, 1939 in Ann Arbor at the age of 72.

Mary's brother and the next child of Peter and Mary Ann Stokes, Peter, will now be discussed. Peter married Sarah Estella King, daughter of Albert King (who was the son of Urial/Uriah King and Keziah Goodrich) and Mary Ellen Saunders (daughter of Benjamin

Saunders and Mary Robinson). In a 1941 *Amherstburg Echo* article “Colored People Of District Had To Start Own School – Peter Stokes Tells History Of Building” Peter recalls the history of a school that was located in Anderdon. The lengthy article says “Announcement that the Board of Trustees of School Section No. 1 was endeavoring to sell the property on the second concession of Anderdon, north of the Texas Road brought back a flood of memories to the colored folk of Amherstburg and district. For it was on this small parcel of land that the colored people, over 80 years ago, established their own school which they maintained until 1917, according to records kept by Peter Stokes, King Street, Amherstburg.”

The article also shares that “Racial prejudice forced them to break with the whites and Indians at the Sloane School and after many hardships which culminated in a court battle, the colored people of Marble Village won recognition by the Government and the school was officially known as S.S. No. 1. The fight for governmental recognition is one of the most outstanding stories in the history of this locality. Previous to 1850, all races which included whites, colored and Indians attended the Sloane School on what is today Brunner Mond property, east of Highway No. 18. Before long, narrow-minded people raised the racial issue which continued to grow and in time forced the colored people of the district to apply at Ottawa for permission to form a colored Separate School. The petition was bucked by some 100 or 125 families, residents of Marble Village, but under English law there was no color distinction and this made it impossible for the government to grant their request. Undaunted, the colored folk continued the battle which was forced upon them by prejudiced people and their efforts were later rewarded with the announcement from Ottawa that they might have their own school, minus financial backing from the government.”

The history continues by saying “Established School – Cheered by this declaration, the colored people immediately withdrew and established their own school in a smaller building on the Sloane place. With no other source of income the pupils were obliged to pay an assessment of 25 cents a month to maintain the school. But the plan worked out well and it wasn’t many years before the colored people had purchased a small tract of land on the second concession, which the trustees of S.S. No. 1 are endeavoring to sell. About 1850 the white section of Sloane School moved to a building north of the Texas Road on the River Front, but the school flourished for only 10 or 12 years. About this time a friend appeared in the person of Roland Winfield, a man of wealth with a desire to assist the colored people. Little is known of Mr. Winfield’s background, but according to Mr. Stokes he was thought to be a Southerner, who owned a block of land north of the Texas Road and west of the second concession known as Marble Village. While Mr. Winfield was looked upon as a philanthropist eight or nine decades ago, he would be classed today as a shrewd real estate dealer. With the view in mind of assisting the colored folk, Mr. Winfield divided his property into small parcels of two, five and ten acres and sold them on the installment plan.”

“But if they all paid the price Peter Stokes, Sr., did for his small piece of land then Mr. Winfield made a mint of money. Curious to see what the land cost his father, the present Mr. Stokes looked up the deed and found to his amazement that his father was charged at the rate of \$96 – an acre. Mr. Stokes, in commenting on the transaction, was of the opinion that the property wouldn’t bring that same price today. However, regardless of the price Mr. Winfield received for his land, he was the one who made it possible for the colored people to own their own school. When the need for a school was brought to his attention, he sold the residents of the district a plot of land and a log building on the second concession for this purpose. The building which is now

for sale today was built some years later. It was the official school in this section of the township after the Sloane School was closed, but it wasn't long before the fight for governmental recognition was forced upon the colored people. The white people in the section started a movement for a new school which was later erected on the Texas Road, east of the third concession. Then came the agitation to make this the official school of Section 1. The colored people fought the movement and the battle ended in the courts at Amherstburg.”

“Trustees -The trustees at the time were Leander Jones, Philip Alexander and John D. Brown. These three men hired a brilliant lawyer by the name of Kirkland and placed the fate of the school in his hands. When the flow of legal oratory had subsided the court ruled that the colored school should remain the official school and continued to get the government grant. In 1850 when the school opened Miss King was the teacher and she was paid \$150 or \$200 a year for her services. Some of the teachers who later served at the school were Miss Julia Turner, George Simons, Mr. Coxfield, Mr. Pocock, Miss Harris, Miss Christian, Jacob Taylor, Alexander MacKenzie, Miss Round, Miss Madeline Foster, J.H. Alexander. The oldest trustees Mr. Stokes can recall were the late A.J. Lucas, John D. Brown and Aaron Saunders. Mr. Stokes himself served as trustee for 12 years and H.D. Banks, George Street, Amherstburg, was treasurer of the board for a number of years.”

The article ends with “60-Year-Old Pupil – In the early years the school boasted the oldest student in the country attending regular classes, Edwin Brooks, grandfather of Jerome Simpson, King Street, hungry for knowledge, attended classes there at the age of 60, carrying his lunch daily to the schoolhouse along with his grandchildren. And Mr. Brook's patience were rewarded for he received a fair education. Some years after the court battle, the ‘white’ school was destroyed by fire. It was not rebuilt and the pupils were compelled to attend either the

colored school or the Separate School on Darragh's Hill, Texas Road. When the Brunner Mond Company began to flourish about 1917 a colony of workmen with families congregated near the quarry. The school accommodations were inadequate and the company resolved to erect a new school. The colored school by this time had outlived its usefulness and it was decided to construct a new building. For this purpose the Brunner Mond leased to the School Section a plot of land on the second concession, south of the Texas Road. In the Spring of 1918 a new public school without color distinction was opened with Miss McCormick as teacher. And with the erection of the new building there passed from the scene one of the oldest centres of learning in the district."

**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 4.**