

Armstrong Family Part 2 – Building a Life in Freedom

As mentioned, Lewis and Weeney Armstrong also had a son named Thomas. According to his obituary from September 26, 1902 (printed in the *Amherstburg Echo*), Thomas Armstrong Sr. was “born in Louisville Ky., and was in slavery for many years. He ran away from his master in 1855 and came to Amherstburg, afterwards returning to Cleveland and was married there to Mrs. Mary Ridout, mother of William and Jas. Ridout. Subsequently he came to Colchester South where he resided until his death ... He was a member and one of the founders of the A.M.E. Zion church ... The edifice was filled and many had to stay outside. Rev. Wright Crosby, an old friend of the deceased, conducted the funeral.”

Previously it was mentioned that two of Lewis and Weeney Armstrong’s children were left behind and whether they arrived in Canada was unclear, but Milo Johnson’s book *New Canaan: Freedom-Land* has a theory for one of the children. According to Johnson, “Since Thomas arrived in 1855, he must have been one of the two older children Weeney Armstrong left behind when she returned to Kentucky in about 1845 to retrieve her children.”

Thomas’ wife Mary Jane Ridout was born circa 1833 and was the daughter of Charles Mahoney and Mary Sisco. After living in Ohio, they returned to Colchester South in 1860. It was there that Thomas purchased property on Lot 10, Bagot Street in Colchester. According to several records, Thomas changed occupations several times. In 1871 he is listed as a labourer, in 1891 he worked as a gardener and his death record states that he was a farmer. Thomas and Mary had at least five children: Sarah Jane (1860), Samuel (1862), Minervia (1865), Thomas (1869), Mary A. (1874).

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 where we will discuss Thomas and Mary's children.