

Brantford Family History Part 2 – “one of the most enterprising and industrious young men”

Next, we'll discuss Moses' sister Frances Brantford. She married Hiram Kirtley, the son of Moses and Elizabeth Kirtley, on December 26, 1858 in Essex County. Hiram was born in the 1830s in Kentucky and if you look at the Kirtley family history on our website you will find even more information about the Kirtley family. According to Frances Brantford's 1891 obituary, she “was a daughter of the late Moses Brantford, and was born and lived all her life in Amherstburg. Her surviving brothers are William, of this town; George of Detroit, and Moses, of Jackson, Mich., and sister, Mrs. J. McGruder, of Battle Creek, Mich., and Claressa Brantford, of this town. She was married to the late Hiram Kirtley, who died about ten years ago. Her surviving children are: — Augustus, of St. Paul, Minn.,; James, Moses and Lyla, of this town. She has, for years, been a consistent member of the First Baptist Church.”

Hiram Kirtley, sometimes spelt Hiram Curtley, worked as a sailor, sometimes listed as a marine engineer. Hiram and Frances/Fanny had several children including Hiram A. (listed as a waiter in 1881 census), James Henry (listed as a cook), Moses (listed as a cook), Elizabeth and Charlotte. The 1871 Census also lists a Sarah as one of their children. According to his death record, Hiram A. was married to Sarah D. Tawles and passed away on March 27, 1926 in St. Paul, Ramsey, Minnesota.

Hiram's brother, James Henry Kirtley, married Ellen Drucilla Brown on January 3, 1894 in Detroit and it was quite the event considering both *The Detroit Enquirer* and *The Amherstburg Echo* wrote about the couple's wedding day. *The Detroit Enquirer* says “One of the most beautiful home weddings of the season was solemnized last Wednesday evening, January 3<sup>rd</sup>, the contracting parties of that most happy event being Miss Ella Brown, one of our most estimable

young ladies, and James A. Kirtley, of Amherstburg, who is one of the most enterprising and industrious young men of that thriving little city by the lake. The ceremony was performed at the home of the bride's mother, Mrs. Elizabeth Clark ... The bride appeared in a beautiful dress of white bengaline silk, high corsage, with train and wearing a veil, and carried a lovely bouquet of bridal roses and hyacinths. The bridesmaid, Miss Coston, of our city, was attired in a pretty dress of pink silk, demi-train with high corsage and flowers. Of course the groom and groomsman, Wm. Webb, of Amherstburg, wore the conventional dress, as usual. The ceremony was performed under a beautiful marriage bell, and the rooms were prettily decorated with ... roses, and the beaming faces of hosts of friends wreathed in bright and happy smiles, who came to attend at the launching of these two dear young folks upon the beautiful [illegible] of matrimony. A reception was held after the ceremony, and the hospitality of the hostess was enjoyed to the utmost, a fine collation of the choicest [illegible] being furnished. There were presents 'galore,' and many very beautiful ones, too, which were displayed in a side room. Silver, crystal and bric-a-brac, linen, porcelain, glass and beautiful china, etc."

Ella's mother, Mrs. Elizabeth Clark is listed in both this article and on their marriage record, but Ella's father is not mentioned. The marriage record also states that Ella was born circa 1868 in Virginia and, just as is listed in the 1881 Census, James' occupation was a cook/marine chef. James' career as a chef is mentioned several times in the *Amherstburg Echo*. On April 15, 1910, it says "James Kirtley, the well known steamboat chef, will be home again this season, having secured the stewardship on the big steel tug Charles E. Williams, of the Buffalo Dredging Co." The following year, on December 29, 1911, the paper still shows him in the same job, but for a different employer and says "James Kirtley, the well-known chef, has accepted a position in the Lake View, as cook for the winter months."

The saddest mention of his career is in his November 10, 1934 (printed November 16, 1934) obituary which refers to him as a respected citizen. The article also says “When a young man he began working in the galley of freighters and followed this occupation until last year. He was chef of the Norton, Zenith City. Richardson, and his last boat was the Mullen, on which he worked for some years. He was well known among mariners and respected for his many fine qualities. Forty years ago he was married to Miss Ella Brown, of Detroit, who survives him. Eight children were born to their union ... Those surviving him are: Frances, Mrs. Alphonse Dezon, Detroit; Miss Flossie, of Detroit; Kenneth, of St. Louis, Mo., AND William, of Chicago, Ill. Mr. Kirtley was a member of the First Baptist Church, Amherstburg and an ardent worker in the activities of the church. At the time of his death he held the office of deacon. He was also a member of Lincoln Lodge, F.& A.M. The funeral was held on Wednesday afternoon under the auspices of this lodge. There was a large number in attendance at the service, which was conducted by Rev. Edwards, pastor of the First Baptist Church, Amherstburg ... The ceremony for the lodge was conducted by Mr. R.J. Robins, Grand Master of Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Ontario. Vocal solos were rendered by Mrs. Wm. Wilson and Mrs. Jerome Simpson. Many beautiful floral tributes and letters of condolence were received by the bereaved family.”

Many nice things are said about James’ wife Ella in her own obituary: “She was born in Virginia, but as a child came to Detroit with her parents to reside. Forty-two years ago she was married to James Kirtley, well known marine chef, who died two years ago. Following their marriage they came to Amherstburg to live. Her maiden name was Ella Brown. Eight children were born to their union ... Mrs. Kirtley was prominent in church and social work among her race. She was a leading member of the First Baptist Church, and headed many of the church

societies.” Ella was involved in several groups, inside and outside of the church. As early as 1895, Ella is listed as a member of the Social Literary Society in Amherstburg. At a “musical party” hosted by Ella and other members such Mrs. Prior Wilson, Miss Christian and F.H.A. Davis, Ella (Mrs. James H. Kirtley) and Miss Mabel Binga gave vocal performances, while guests also enjoyed refreshments and games.

Among the other organizations that Ella was involved with include the Women’s Guild of the First Baptist Church. In the January 28, 1927 edition of the *Amherstburg Echo* it discusses a meeting at the home of Mrs. Estella Stokes “for the purpose of closing the books for the year 1926 and electing officers for 1927.” Among those elected was Mrs. E.D. Kirtley as the Treasurer. She was also a member of Amherstburg’s Central Grove Club.

Other articles list her activities, but she is often listed as Mrs. James Kirtley. A common way to recognize women at that time was by using their husband’s names. A reception for the Frederick Douglass Self Improvement Club, an Amherstburg-based etiquette club, was held in the home of “Mr. and Mrs. Jas. H. Kirtley, King street, on Wednesday. The evening was spent in games, singing and other amusements, which were kept up till the wee sma hours of the morning and all departed extending to the host and hostess their hearty thanks for their hospitality.” Many years later, in 1925, Ella attended the Michigan and Ontario Wolverine state convention as a representative from the Women’s Missionary Society of the First Baptist Church. The same year, she attended the Regular Baptist Association Home Mission and Sunday School convention in Toronto, which also involved guests attending a fair. Several years later, in 1932, Mrs. J.H. Kirtley participated in the missionary service held in Windsor at the British Methodist Episcopal Church, likely as a representative of the First Baptist Church.

Clearly, Ella was active in the community and the same can be said for her husband, James Henry. He was involved in the Amherstburg Literary Association which met at the King Street School House, just down the street from the Amherstburg Freedom Museum. On several occasions in 1881, the *Amherstburg Echo* reported the activities of this group, particularly debates. In January 1881, James Kirtley was given the title of captain for a debate that concerned “which is productive of the greatest amount of evil, intemperance or the sword.” The next month, he participated in a three-cornered debate which asked the following question: “A woman is alone and ill on an island, and is discovered by one man, is brought off by a second man, and is cured by a third man, and each claims that his right to her is the best – Whose is?” The right of No. 1 was championed by W.G. Kirk and Augustus Adams, that of No. 2 by N. McCurdy and James Monroe, and that of No. 3 by Ralph Adams and J. Kirtley. Decision was given in favour of Messrs. McCurdy and Monroe.”

Ella and James H. Kirtley’s obituaries both mention that they had eight children, but only list the four surviving children: Frances, Flossie, Kenneth and William. The remaining children include Hervey/Harvey, James Edgar, Norman and Azalia. To learn more about Ella and James’ children, go to <https://amherstburgfreedom.org/kirtley-family/> to read the Kirtley Family History.

**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.**