

The Christian Family History Part 2 – A Family of Many Firsts

Henry and Anne Christian had seven children: Elizabeth, Susan, Sarah Ellen, Alice, Charles Henry, Thomas and Ada. The 1871 Census lists Henry Christian (spelt Cristin on the Census) and his wife Annie with some of their children: Elizabeth, Susan, Seregh (Sarah), Alice and Charles. The following pages will discuss them and the rest of their siblings. We will begin with Elizabeth. According to her death record from 1930, Elizabeth was born on July 23, 1861 in Anderdon. Her marriage record states that Elizabeth married William H. Kelly on October 2, 1890 in Amherstburg. According to the *Amherstburg Echo* the wedding took place at the residence of the bride's mother (Anne) in Amherstburg and the service was conducted by the Reverend W.S. Kane. According to the 1911 Census, William worked as a Shoe Cutter, while Elizabeth worked as a dress maker. The couple had at least seven children: William, Ada, Joseph Carter, Alice Yvonne, Ruth, Helen and Leonard Russell.

William and Elizabeth (Christian) Kelly's first child William Christian Kelly was born in Windsor on October 20, 1891. He married Lily Harrison. He graduated with the 1923 Class of the Royal College of Dental Surgeons of Ontario and was the first Black Dentist in Windsor. The Museum's family history collection states that William and Lily's children included Louise Wilhelmina, Christine Joan, and Patricia. Louise and Christine were respected teachers (Louise in Windsor and Christine in Toronto) and, impressively, Patricia was an internal medicine specialist in Michigan.

There was not a lot of information for William's brother Joseph Carter other than his birth record which states he was born in Windsor on June 2, 1895. There is substantially more information for Joseph Carter's sister Ada. Her birth record lists her date of birth as June 1, 1893 (some records say May 31, 1893) and she was born in Windsor. Did you know she became the

first Black teacher hired by the Windsor Board of Education, in addition to being the first woman of African descent to teach in an Ontario Public School Board. She married Joseph Raymond Bishop Whitney, son of Robert B. Whitney and Mary Butler. The couple married on June 30, 1919 in Windsor and their marriage record states that Joseph was a widower and worked as an editor. Did you know Joseph was the editor of the *Canadian Observer* (1914-1919) in Toronto which was a voice for Black Canadians who challenged discriminatory treatment in Canada. Ada and Joseph had four children: Adell, Yenwith, Electa and Ada Ella. Yenwith married a woman named Muriel; Electa married Henry Holland and had two sons named Wendell and Brian; and Ada Ella married Alvin Robinson. Ada and Alvin's children include Cora, Ray, Cecile, Audrey and Alvin Roy.

When Ada passed away, a detailed obituary was printed in the *Long Island Press*, on Thursday, March 16, 1972, which said "Ada E. Whitney Succumbs at 78; Religious Worker-Memorial services will be held Sunday at 11 a.m. in the Lutheran Church of the Incarnation of Jamaica for Mrs. Ada Ellen Whitney, 78, of South Ozone Park, leader in religious circles and retired social worker ... In her religious work during her 21 years in Queens, she established the Minden Camp Farthest Out in Bridgehampton, one of the first interdenominational prayer groups; formed the Koinonia Group at the Lutheran Church of the Incarnation; trained Sunday School teachers at Rush Temple A.M.E. Zion Church of Jamaica, was a study group leader for Zone 9 (Queens) of the Church of the Master in Manhattan, and served as Sunday School superintendent at St. Mark's for 14 years. During her 32 previous years in the Bronx, Mrs. Whitney's social work included the establishment of the first of the present-day day centers for senior citizens in Harlem and became director of the Senior Peoples' Community Club."

The obituary continues by saying “A member of the city’s Department of Social Services since 1947, she was a caseworker, then worked with the agency’s Foster Home Program of the Aged, and later became a librarian for the Bureau of Social Services. In 1969 Mrs. Whitney was honored at a retirement dinner by the department. She was born in Windsor, Ontario, Canada, where she became the first black school teacher. When she moved to the Bronx, she became the first black vice president of the United Parents Association. Mrs. Whitney was a life member of the NAACP and served in many civic educational, political and religious organizations. She leaves three daughters, Adell of South Ozone Park, Mrs. Electa Holland of Maryland and Mrs. Ada Robinson of Tennessee; a son, Yenwith of New Jersey; a sister, Mrs. Ruth Simpson of Detroit; a brother, Carter Kelly of Windsor, Ont., and nine grandchildren. Her husband Joseph, died in 1948.”

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.