Deep Canadian Roots in the Davis Family – Part 2

James and his wife, Anne, had three children: Harriet, James Jr. and Delos Rogest Davis. Harriet was born on 16 February 1848 and went on to marry Griffith Booth, residing in Kalamazoo, Michigan. Interestingly, family lore says that James Jr. was born on the Potomac River on 17 March 1840, and later married Mary Jane Lewis on 24 December 1862. He lived in Colchester North and had three children: James was born in 1866, while Walter, became the Reverend Walter Davis and married Susan Hawkins, daughter of Washington Hawkins. James Jr. and Mary Jane's third child, Ann, was married Dan Woodson.

Of the three children, Delos Rogest Davis is the most well known. He was born on 4 August 1843 and became the third Canadian Black lawyer in the history of Canada, but also the first Underground Railroad freedom seeker to become a lawyer in Canada. His journey to that point was very difficult. On 19 June 1873, he qualified to practise as a notary public, but racism prevented him from finding a lawyer willing to work with him so that he could gain further experience. Before taking the entrance exam, it was required that individuals studying law must article for a period of time under the guidance of a lawyer, but Delos could not find anyone who would oblige his request. What might come as a surprise is that in 1884, Delos was able to convince William Balfour, MPP for Amherstburg, to introduce a special law that permitted him to act as a lawyer, but he had to pass a test from the Law Society of Upper Canada and pay a standard fee before the law would take effect. Delos passed the examination and was sworn in on 19 May 1885. The following year, William Balfour introduced a second special request, which allowed Delos to become a barrister upon passing the requisite exam. He was called to the bar on 15 November 1886 and in the following year … To be continued. Don't worry. There is still more history to come next week in part 3 of the Davis Family History. Stay Tuned.