

Simpson Family History (Levi Simpson's Line) Part 3 – The County Constable

Now that we have discussed the children of Elizabeth Victoria Simpson Davis, we will move on to her remaining siblings: Susanna, Nancy, Amy, Eliza, and Mahala. Susanna Simpson was born in North Colchester Township on March 9, 1845. Susanna married Anthony Banks, the son of William Banks and Esther Malawice (Fields) Banks, who contributed to the progress of Essex County and broke down barriers (See Banks Family <https://amherstburgfreedom.org/banks-family/>). It was on April 12, 1881 that the Crown Attorney of Essex County, S.S. MacDonnell, appointed Anthony Banks as the Constable of Essex County, making him the first Black Canadian to hold this position in Ontario. In 1892, he was also appointed the Deputy Warden for the Ontario Game and Fishing Commission, which meant that he enforced game and fishery laws for the province. This was in addition to acting as a school trustee, Treasurer and Roadmaster as he was labelled in the *Amherstburg Echo*. Anthony Banks held the position of Constable for Essex County for almost 50 years and when he retired, the *Amherstburg Echo* gifted Anthony with a lifetime subscription. He certainly earned this gift.

Anthony's obituary from October 1929 shares further details of his life and says "Anthony Banks, aged 89 years, 3 months and 3 days, died at his home in Colchester South on Thursday evening. Death was due to old age. Mr. Banks was one of the township's oldest citizens and during his life took an active interest in township and political affairs. He was appointed County Constable by the late S.S. McDonnell, then Crown Attorney of Essex County, and for a quarter of a century he was very active in the work at a time when there was a great deal of hectic court work to do. He also served as school trustee. He was born in Colchester South, the son of an escaped slave from the United States, who fled that country and came to

Canada to be free. He was twice married, the first time to Susan Simpson, and to them a family of fourteen children was born, nine of who are living, W. Ervin, of Toronto, Walter, of Colchester North; who is a County Constable, Gordon of California, Bert and James of Buffalo and Eli at home, Mrs. Martha Dennis, Mrs. Delia Garvin and Mrs. Cora White all of Detroit. During his life, Mr. Banks philosophy of life was that he would rather wear out than rust out. He had a long life of usefulness and counted his friends by the hundreds. About twenty years ago after the death of his first wife, he was married to a widow, Mrs. William Ridout, who survives him. Funeral services were held in Central Grove Church on Sunday at 2p.m. and were conducted by the Rev. Levi Wells, of Virginia, a nephew of the deceased. The pallbearers were five sons, W. Ervin, Walter, Bert, Eli and James also a nephew Si Simpson, of Detroit. Burial was in Central Grove cemetery.”

Susanna Simpson, Anthony’s wife, passed away twenty years before Anthony in February 1909 and her obituary says “We regret to record this week the death of Mrs. Anthony Banks; who passed away on Sunday following a short illness with pneumonia, aged 63 years. The deceased was a daughter of the late Levi Simpson and was born in this township. The family consisted of ten children as follows: Irving, Walter, Darius, John B., Garnet, all Grand Trunk chefs; Todd, at home; Gordon, in Washington Territory; Mrs. Martha Dennis, Detroit; and two daughters at home. Besides these she leaves three sisters and two brothers. The funeral took place on Tuesday afternoon, services being conducted by Rev. Peter Brookes and burial was in Central Grove cemetery, the pallbearers being six sons – Walter, Irving, Darius, John B., Garnet, and Todd. Much sympathy is extended the bereaved husband and family.”

As mentioned in the obituaries for Anthony and Susan, they had several children including nine boys: William Erving, Walter, George, James, John, Gordon, Garnett, Anthony

Jr., and Eli, and five girls Emma, Elzora, Martha, Adella, and Cora. Except for Cora, Garnett, Eli and Anthony Jr. (twins), all of their children were born in a log cabin owned by Anthony's mother, Esther. Esther's farm was one hundred acres of land with a log cabin and a cemetery for the burial of family members. The four children, mentioned above, were born in the family home that Anthony built, which was on 54 acres of land in South Colchester. After Susan's passing, Anthony married a widow, Katherine Rideout, from Colchester South, on 11 March 1910; they had no children.

Among Anthony and Susan's children was their daughters Adella, who married Julius Mumford Garvin of Detroit on October 7, 1914. They had a daughter Katherine and owned a small dressmaking shop, while Cora, who is mentioned above, was born on September 18, 1891 and married Blake White on July 4, 1917. Martha was born on July 19, 1943 and married Frank Dennis, and had one child, Walter, who was born on September 22, 1896. All three sisters resided in Detroit. Emma was born on September 24, 1865 and was buried behind her grandmother's log cabin. Elzora was born in 1866, but died in infancy. She, like Emma, was buried in the cemetery behind her grandmother's log cabin.

Anthony and Susan's son W. Erving was born on August 6, 1863 and was married four times. First to Henrietta Bradford, second to Willa Ann, third was Mrs. Barnes and his fourth wife was Gertrude. He was also a chef with New York Central and Canadian National Railway for over 30 years and was known to meet "friends from South Essex on the International Limited, one of the ... trains of the C.N.R. system."

George was born on February 7, 1871 and married Carrie Simpson. They had a daughter, Viola. George's brothers, John and James, owned a saloon in Saginaw, Michigan and James was

also a chef for the Canadian National Railroad. Garnett, born on April 5, 1885, never married and was employed by the C.N.R. It was during one of his trips with the C.N.R. that he fell into a lake in Northern Ontario. He developed tuberculosis which sadly caused his death at age 26.

Anthony Jr. and Eli were born on December 1, 1886. Eli, also known as Todd, never married and farmed the family homestead. Susan and Anthony's other son, Gordon, was listed as living "in the west," possibly in Oakland, California, while Walter married a schoolteacher, Elvia Dixon of Windsor on January 15, 1897. They had no children, but Walter followed in his father's footsteps by becoming a County Constable. Walter also had a farm in Colchester North. Farming was common in the Banks family, as they farmed the land, raising cattle and chickens, growing fruits and vegetables, churning butter, producing flour and growing tobacco. Anthony Banks owned 116 acres of Lot 9 on Concession 3 in South Colchester, which was worth \$3,000.

Anthony's granddaughter, Cordella, wrote that the Banks' family home was "open to all who were either homeless or who needed temporary shelter. Thus, one could always find an assortment of friends or relatives who lived with the family from time to time." Cordella mentions one specific example, "Uncle Ben" Murray, who escaped enslavement in Virginia and lived with the Banks family as an elderly man. Cordella recalls her mother's memory of sitting for hours listening to Uncle Ben tell stories about his life while enslaved and how he, along with his brother, escaped to Canada "by following the 'North Star' and putting cayenne pepper in their tracks so the bloodhounds could not pursue them."

It is now time to move on to Susanna Simpson Banks' sister, Nancy. According to her obituary, she was born on March 10, 1844. She married more than once. Her first marriage was to James/Francis Harris, her second was to Franklin Wells and her third marriage was to Robert

A. Thomas. Nancy and Francis Harris had at least three children: Cora, Levinia/Lavinia and Mary. Cora married Charles S. Mitchell who is referred to as Mead Mitchell in their marriage record and his parents are listed as Francis and Priscilla Mitchell. The death record for Cora Anna Mitchell states that she passed on July 22, 1944 in Kalamazoo, Michigan at the age of 78. It also states that she was born on December 21, 1865 in Windsor.

Cora's sister Lavinia Ellen Harris married David Foster, the son of Henry and Annie Foster, on March 1, 1887 in Windsor. The 1911 Census lists David and Levinie (Lavinia) with their children: Freddie, David, and Willfred. No information was available for Freddie, but David Augustus Foster was born on February 9, 1897 in Anderdon. He later married Lena Marie Green, the daughter of Hugh Green, on June 9, 1916 in Windsor. David's brother Wilfred Harold Foster was born on May 29, 1903 in Anderdon. Their mother Lavinia Simpson Foster's death record states that she passed away on June 11, 1923 in Windsor at the age of 54.

As previously mentioned, Nancy Simpson married more than once. Her second marriage was to Frank Wells. The 1891 Census lists Franklin Wells with Nancy and their children: Albert, Lillie and Levi Charles, but records for an additional child, Maude, was found. According to his birth record, Albert Arthur Wells was born on August 17, 1876 in Windsor, while his sister Maude R. Wells was born on October 13, 1878 in Windsor. Their brother Charles Levi Wells married Claudie Adeen Harris, the daughter of John and Lucinda Harris. Their children included Cora Lavinia who was born on October 4, 1904 in Windsor and Charles Franklin who was born on October 27, 1912. Charles Franklin sadly passed away less than two years later, on February 23, 1914.

Nancy Simpson's third marriage was to Robert A. Thomas. He was the son of Robert and Winifred Thomas, and the couple married on December 7, 1904. At the time, Robert was 65 and

Nancy was 50. Interestingly, Nancy's death record lists her as English because of her mother Elizabeth Hutchinson who, as mentioned previously, was born in Manchester, England. On Nancy's death record, it states that her mother Elizabeth was born "At Sea."

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.