

Simpson Family History (Levi Simpson's Line) Part 4 – The Basketball Star

The next child of Levi Simpson and Elizabeth Hutchinson is Amy. She married John H. Perry and they had at least eight children, but sadly only two survived any length of time. According to the Museum's collection, the surviving children were George and John. George's marriage record states that he married Susan Jackson, the daughter of Peter Jackson and Mahalia Powell, on November 19, 1887 in Detroit. George's death record states that he passed away on August 26, 1932 in Jackson, Michigan, but was born on March 20, 1858.

There is a second marriage record for Amy Simpson Perry and Levi Mitchell, the son of Henderson and Elizabeth Mitchell, from July 2, 1891 in Colchester. Also found was another marriage record for Emma Keziah Simpson Mitchell, the daughter of Levi and Elizabeth Simpson, to Henry William White, the son of Austin White and Martha Jane Mitchell. The couple married on December 25, 1904 in Colchester and there is a possibility that Emma Keziah is also Amy, or at least one of her siblings.

There are only two more children of Levi and Elizabeth Simpson to discuss: Eliza J. and Mahala. Eliza J. Simpson married Henry Long, the son of James and Lucinda Long. According to the Museum's collection, Eliza and Henry had at least three children: Susan, Lizzie (m. Brooks), and Eliza. Eliza J. married a second time to Matthew Lewis. Their children include Julia A. (m. James Baylis and William Talbert), twins Albert and Alvin, Nancy, twins Mary and Martha, and twins Ida (m. Jim Artis) and Eliza (m. Crosby). The 1871 Census lists Mathew, Eliza and their children Elizabeth, Susan, Julia, and Nancy, but also lists another child: John. The 1881 Census lists Mathew Lewis with his children Julia, Nancy, John, Martha, Albert, Eliza and Ida. Further information was available for Julia, Albert, Nancy, Mary Ann, Martha, and Alzora who is not recorded in the Census records previously mentioned. According to the marriage

record for Julia Ann Lewis, she married James H. Baylis, the son of Henry and Mary Jean Baylis. They married on May 17, 1882 in Colchester. The couple had at least one son named James Bert Baylis who was born on March 23, 1887 in Macomb, Michigan. Julia married again as her death record lists her as Julia Talbert, daughter of Eliza and Mathew Lewis. Her husband's name is not listed in this document, but the Museum's collection lists her husband as William Talbert. She passed on October 29, 1939 in Ypsilanti, Michigan at the age of 72. This record also states that she was born on February 17, 1867.

Julia's brother Albert Lewis married Almeda Hurst, the daughter of Hilliard Hurst and Amanda Chavis, on April 18, 1898 in Harrow. Almeda was born circa 1877 in Colchester South. According to their marriage record, Almeda worked as a "domestic" while Albert was a "cook." The couple had one daughter named Eliza who was born on July 17, 1898. She married a carpenter named William Scott, who was the son of Henry Scott and Mary Hill. The couple was married on September 19, 1917.

The death record for Albert Lewis states that he passed away on January 29, 1934 in Colchester. Albert's obituary from the *Amherstburg Echo* shares more details and says he "was born in Colchester South, the son of Matthew and Eliza Simpson Lewis, and was living on Erie Street in Harrow until last spring when his house was burned and he moved into the township where he was employed at odd jobs. He was married to Almeda Hurst, daughter of the late Hilliard Hurst, who survives him, 35 years ago. Their only child, Eliza, died some years ago. Surviving him besides his wife are five sisters, Nancy, Mrs. Arthur Coates, Harrow; Mrs. Eliza Brooks and Mrs. Susan Armstrong, Romeo, Mich.; Miss Martha Lewis and Mrs. Julia Talbot, Ypsilanti, Mich.; and one brother, John, of Harrow. The funeral will be held this (Friday)

afternoon at Central Grove Church at 1:30 o'clock with interment following in Central Grove cemetery."

Albert's sister and the next child of Eliza Simpson and Mathew Lewis, Nancy, is up next. She married Arthur Coates, son of Milton Coates and Fannie Reynolds, on April 5, 1921 in Detroit. Nancy's death record states that she died on May 9, 1944 in Detroit at the age of 77 and was born in Harrow on January 1, 1867.

Nancy's twin sisters Mary Ann and Martha were born on March 4, 1872 in Colchester, while their sister Alzora married Henry Hurst, the son of Ransom and Ellen Hurst. Alzora and Henry married in June of 1884 in Amherstburg. Henry was born circa 1859 in Harrow, and their marriage record says that Henry was a farmer and 23 years of age, while Alzora was 16.

The last child of Levi Simpson and Elizabeth Hutchinson that we will discuss is Mahala, also referred to as Sarah. She married George Arthur Thomas, the son of John and Susan Ann Thomas, on November 18, 1873 in Windsor. No obituary was available in the *Amherstburg Echo* but her death record, which refers to her as Sarah Mahalie Thomas, states that she died on December 3, 1930 in Windsor at the age of 81 and that she was a widow. It also states that she was born on April 16, 1849. Mahala Simpson and George Thomas had at least six children: Ina, George Arthur, Sarah Myrtle, Walter Alexander, Charles Frederick, and Maude Elizabeth. Ina married William A. Shadd, the son of Garrison and Harriet Shadd, on May 7, 1902 in Windsor. Ina's death record also states that she passed away on September 3, 1923 in Raleigh, Kent County at the age of 45.

Ina's brother George Arthur was born on April 6, 1880, but sadly passed away in August of the same year. George's sister Sarah Myrtle Thomas was born on September 1, 1881 and later

married Ferdinand Henderson, the son of William Henderson and Amelia Edwards. The couple married on March 26, 1902 in Windsor and Ferdinand, at this time, worked as a salesman.

Sarah Myrtle's brother Walter Alexander was born on June 17, 1885 and later married Alma Lillian Deshatta on June 25, 1912. According to their marriage record, Alma was the daughter of George Deshatta and Florance Sempa.

Charles Frederick Thomas was born on May 1, 1888 and later married Edith Mae Jones, the daughter of Fred and Jane Jones, on July 27, 1921 in Detroit. They resided in Windsor where Charles worked for the City of Windsor for over 40 years before retiring. Their children included Fred, Helen, Freida, Dorothy, Edith, Hazel and George.

Of their children, Fred is the most well-known. Born in Windsor on December 26, 1923, Fred Thomas became known as "one of Canada's finest ever basketball players," and was able to deliver the perfect hook shot with either hand. Fred attended Patterson Collegiate, playing a big role in the school winning the All-Ontario Basketball championship during his senior year. Following graduation, he joined the Royal Canadian Air Force as a pilot in 1943, earning his wings and serving until 1945. It was then that he enrolled at Assumption College. He first played for Assumption College and is responsible for leading them to the Canadian Senior Men's Finals in 1949. In fact, during the 1948-49 season, he set a record by scoring 639 points in a single season. Thomas also scored 2,059 points throughout his four-year basketball career at Assumption and remains one of the only player to score 2,000 points for Assumption or the University of Windsor. On February 23, 1945, Fred led Assumption to a victory over the Harlem Globetrotters with a score of 49-45, which must have impressed the Globetrotter organization because they invited him to join their organization.

Following his time with Assumption, Thomas played professional basketball with the Harlem Globetrotters for two seasons and, later, played for the Toronto Tri-Bells. His biggest disappointment was not being chosen for Canada's Olympic basketball team in 1952 but time and time again Thomas proved himself to be a multi-talented athlete, expanding into baseball and football. Thomas became the first Black player to compete in the professional Eastern League (baseball). Not only did he make his debut on July 4, 1948 for the Wilkes-Barre Barons, which was a minor-league affiliate of the Cleveland Indians, he also played for the Kitchener Panthers, where he was the League Batting Champion with an average of .383. If that was not enough, Thomas also had a brief career as a football player with the Toronto Argonauts in 1949, but a knee injury ended his football career.

Among Fred's numerous acknowledgements, Thomas was also inducted into the Windsor/Essex County Sports Hall of Fame in 1981; the University of Windsor Alumni Sports Hall of Fame in 1986; the Afro-American Hall of Fame in 1994, and the Canadian Basketball Hall of Fame in 1995. Following his sports career, Fred transferred his athletic skills to teaching where he became a physical education teacher in Toronto, where he taught for over 20 years. Fred Thomas passed away on May 20, 1981.

Charles Frederick's sister Maude Elizabeth is next. She was born on August 4, 1892 and her birth record also reveals that her father George worked as a fireman for C.P. Railway.

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 where we will celebrate a second line of the Simpson family through James Simpson.