

Stokes Family Part 4 – Days of Slavery Still Seem Real

A separate newspaper article titled “Days of Slavery Still Seem Real” also involves Peter Stokes’ memories, but this time about his own family’s history. The article says “And to others in the Windsor district the days of slavery seem as real as though it were actually yesterday, or perhaps the day before. The parents of many local folk were once actually sold on the slave block. Peter A. Stokes, 112 King street, Amherstburg, brings out an old muzzle-loading rifle and hand-made knife, brandishes both when the subject of freedom is broached. Born in 1870, he has never for one moment lost sight of the value of being a free man. ‘My grandfather was beaten to death in the United States,’ he says. ‘My father was a slave in Kentucky, and ran away with his whole family because he wanted to be free. This is the gun he carried with them. It claimed three lives in my father’s fight for freedom. This knife also did its part. Both the knife and the gun would be used again if my freedom were threatened. Freedom means everything to us. It means life. I’d just as soon be dead or die fighting rather than be a slave the way my father and his folks were.’”

According to Sarah Estella King’s obituary, her husband Peter worked as a gardener for the John Mullen and Fred Elliott estates. In October 1931 the *Amherstburg Echo* published an article that further discusses Peter’s work in gardening through the Amherstburg Garden Contest. The article titled “YARD CONTEST WINNERS ANNOUNCED” says “Prizes Given in Each of the Three Wards – J. Jones, Judge – “... Mr. Jones and his brother visited every street in the town and considered that great credit is due to many of the people of Amherstburg for the time they spent on the upkeep of their lawns ... The prizes were awarded as follows: ... Second Ward – best lawns and gardens, Ray Nicholson, Gore street; C. Drouillard, Murray street; Peter Stokes, King street.”

Peter Stokes and Sarah Estella King had one child named Mae Elizabeth who was born on September 25, 1895 in Anderdon. According to her Naturalization Application from 1941, she was working as a cook, was not married and had no children. Sadly, a few years later, Mae Elizabeth passed away in April 1946 at the age of 50. Her obituary adds that she was a practical nurse and received her training at the Chicago School of Nursing. Before returning to Amherstburg, she lived in Ann Arbor.

The last child of Peter and Mary Ann Stokes that will be discussed is Abbie. She married Isaac Eugene Hughbanks, the son of Robert Hughbanks and Jane Fairfax, on July 30, 1908 in Windsor. It is likely that Abbie and Isaac didn't have any children because the 1910 and 1920 Census lists list Abbie and Isaac, but no children. In same year as the latter Census, Abbie passed away on April 20, 1920 at the age of 43 from stomach cancer.

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 5.