

The Baylis Family History Part 1 – Settlements in Essex County

This month's family history focusses on the Baylis family, specifically through two members: Henry Baylis and Robert Baylis. We'll begin with Henry Baylis who was born in Lewiston, Delaware circa 1827. He married Mary Jane (Laufin) Washington, who was also from Lewiston and the daughter of Lebediah Laufin and Elizabeth Lewis. They moved to the Philadelphia area likely after escaping enslavement, pre 1850. According to the book *New Canaan, Freedom-Land*, Henry and Mary Jane arrived in the Colchester South Township area in roughly 1858 and purchased 50 acres of land on Lot 8, Hillsville at the junction of Roseborough Road and the 3rd Concession.

Have you ever heard of Hillsville? It was a name used by Black residents in Essex County which described a concentration of Black residents living on the 3rd Concession. The community, according to Milo Johnson, "stretched westward, from 3rd Concession at the Richmond drain, towards the McLean Side Road, east of Walker Road; and from Roseborough, near 3rd Concession, it stretched north towards the 4th Concession." Hillsville had two main churches: Mount Calvary Church of God in Christ and Central Grove on the corner of the 4th Concession and Walker Road. Hilliard Hurst was very active in the community and was referred to as the "Mayor of Hillsville."

Henry Baylis farmed in Hillsville for about 60 years and was a well-respected citizen. Years after Henry's passing, his wife Mary Jane sold their farm and lived with her son Samuel on Gore Road. When Mary Jane passed in 1919, the *Amherstburg Echo* remarked that she "was above the average in intelligence and was a credit to her race both as a citizen and a consistent Christian woman."

Henry and Mary Jane's children include Maria, Moses (1850), Elizabeth (1855), John (1857), James Henry (1858), Victoria (1860), Theodore (1861), Samuel (1864), William (1865), and Mary (1868). There was no available information for Maria, but plenty to share about Moses. According to several records, Moses was born circa 1850 in Philadelphia. He married Alice Marshall, the daughter of Alexander Marshall and Maria Ann Boyd. Moses and Alice had two sons named John (1879) and Harry (1888). Sadly, John passed away at the age of 17 in 1895 after contracting measles which spread to his lungs. Harry married and established himself on a farm on Concession 4 in the Hillsville area. Sadly he also died young after contracting tuberculosis and dying of heart failure at the age of 27 in 1915. Harry's wife, whose name we do not know, passed away a few years later, in 1918, in Detroit where she lived following Harry's passing. Do you know who Harry's wife was?

The family of Moses Baylis lived on a 10-acre farm on the 3rd Concession in the Matthews Settlement, which began when Mathew Matthews first purchased land in 1819. Its location is approximately five miles northwest of Harrow, Colchester South Township. It, according to Milo Johnson, stretched from the 2nd, 3rd and 4th Concessions at the Drummond Road intersections and the area north and south of Concession #2 from Drummond Side Road to Smith Side Road. It was approximately five square miles of space. Matthews also played an instrumental role in building the settlement's first church and school. In fact, the first church was built on his property in 1819, while the school was built near the church a few years later, in 1825.

Sadly, Moses passed on September 1, 1930 in Colchester. He was a very religious person and he often spoke to groups at church and other gatherings. Moses' sister Elizabeth is who we will discuss next, but all we could find was a death record that states she passed on September 2,

1929 in Essex at the age of 77. At the time of her death she was a widow, but the record does not name her husband. There were also no records available for Elizabeth's siblings John, Victoria, William and Samuel, except for previously mentioning that Samuel and his mother Mary Jane lived in the same house on Gore Road after the passing of Samuel's father Henry. There is more information for the remaining Baylis children: James Henry, Theodore and Mary Annie.

James Henry was born circa 1858. He married Julia Ann Lewis on May 17, 1882 in Colchester. Julia was the daughter of Matthew and Eliza Lewis. The couple had at least one son named James Bert Baylis who was born on March 23, 1887 in Macomb, Michigan. James later married Ada Beck on November 21, 1911 in Windsor. Ada was the daughter of George Beck and Josie Hopkins.

James Henry's brother, Theodore, was born in 1861 and passed away at the age of 22, on October 16, 1883 in Colchester. Theodore's sister Mary Annie was born circa 1868 and she later married Robert Eli Powell on July 10, 1884 in Amherstburg. Robert Eli Powell was the son of Louis and Hettie Powell. Interestingly, the 1901 Census for Colchester South shows Mary Baylis Powell living with her mother Mary and siblings. Mary Annie's father Henry is not listed because he passed away a few years earlier in 1896. The 1901 Census does not list Mary Baylis Powell's husband Robert, but there is an "M" for Married next to Mary Annie's name. Mary Annie married a second time on December 18, 1823 in Windsor to David Washington who was the son of Thomas Washington and Emily Warfield. Just a note for their marriage record which lists Mary Annie as Annie Baylis Pow, not Powell.

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 2.