

The Brown/Nelson Family History Part 4 – The Adopted Son

As mentioned, the reason why we were inspired to write the Brown family history is because of their adopted son Fremont Nelson, so it is time to share information for Fremont and his birth family. Fremont was the son of James A. Nelson and Hester (sometimes listed as Esther) Ann Thompson who were married on January 10, 1870 in Wyandot, Ohio. One reference to Fremont's parents states that James A. Nelson and Hester Ann Thompson had 23 children. We found information for nine children: William E., Fremont, Harvey, Mrs. William Foster (possibly Adella/Adelia), Sophia, Ophelia, John B., Parsend and Gracy Ann.

We will discuss Fremont last and begin with his brother William E. Nelson. William's death record states that he was born on November 15, 1849 in Ohio and he passed away on March 17, 1916 in Fostoria, Seneca, Ohio. This record also shows that he was a labourer and married, but his wife's name is not listed. The *Amherstburg Echo* mentions William's passing in March 1916 stating "Freemont Nelson was called to Fostoria, Ohio, on Sunday, owing to the death of his brother, William E. Nelson, who died there that day, aged 67 years. He had been ailing for some time with Bright's disease, but the end came very suddenly. He leaves a wife and three children. He was buried on Tuesday, the funeral taking place from the First Baptist church. He was one of twenty-three children born to the late James A. Nelson, and of these three brothers and three sisters are still living."

According to the death record for William's brother Harvey, he was born on August 23, 1883 in Upper Sandusky, Ohio, was single and worked as a "Hod Carrier." Harvey passed away on January 2, 1917, at the age of 33 in Lima, Allen, Ohio.

Next is Harvey's sister Mrs. William Foster who is referenced in the *Amherstburg Echo* when it said, "Freemont Nelson received a message on Monday of the death of his sister, Mrs. Wm. Foster, of Marion, Ohio." While researching who this woman could be, a marriage record for Adella/Adelia Nelson who married William Foster on May 3, 1866 in Clinton, Ohio, was found. There were no other records that could confirm this, so we cannot say with 100% certainty that this is the correct Mrs. William Foster.

Also mentioned in this article is Fremont's other sister Sophia Nelson who is mentioned as "seriously ill" in Detroit, Michigan. There was more information available for Sophia who married George Smith. The 1900 Census for Detroit lists Sophia Smith as aged 52, a housekeeper and widow. It mentions she was born circa July 1848 in Ohio, and also lists her children: Gertrude (age 25 and a Domestic), George (age 23 and a Teamster), Grace (age 20 and a Domestic), and Olah (age 17 and a Domestic).

No further information was found for Gertrude, but the death record for George Smith Jr. states that he was born on June 3, 1878 in Ohio, was single and died on December 9, 1937 in Detroit at the age of 59. George's sister Grace, according to her death record, was born on March 10, 1882 in Toledo, was single and passed away on April 30, 1927 in Detroit. Grace's sister Olah married twice. Her first marriage was to Fred. D. Brown, the son of William Brown and Dora Fallis. The couple married on October 15, 1902 and Fred worked as a Porter. Olah's second marriage was to Daniel White, the son of Stephen and Louisa White, and they married on March 19, 1923 in Lucas, Ohio. This record also shares that Olah was born circa 1884.

Next is Ophelia Nelson, the next child of James A. Nelson and Hester Ann Thompson. She married John C. Collins. The 1900 Census for Pontiac Township, Michigan, which lists Ophelia A. Collins, states that she was born circa August 1844 in Ohio and married John circa

1863, also in Ohio. The Census also lists Ophelia's husband John C. Collins and their children Ritta E. Collins and Charles E. Collins. Also listed is Eliza A. Peill? who is listed as John's mother. The Census also records John's occupation as a Wheel Maker. John and Ophelia also had a daughter named Eva Ophelia who sadly passed away in 1932 which is mentioned in the *Amherstburg Echo* which says "Freemont Nelson, chef Deerhead Inn, is attending the funeral Saturday at Ypsilanti, of his niece, Miss Eva Collins, who died there Wednesday. She is daughter of John and Ophelia (Nelson) Collins." Her death record states that she was a widow and born on December 24, 1862 in Sandusky, Ohio.

The next child of James Nelson and Hester Thompson is John B. He married Nannie E. Williams who was born in Ashville, NC, and was the daughter of Alfred Williams and Metilda Hanson. John B. and Nannie E. married on July 18, 1918 in Seneca, Ohio. This record also mentions that John B. was born in Upper Sandusky, Ohio.

John B.'s sister Gracy Ann was born on August 10, 1871 in Salem Township, Wyandot, Ohio, while her brother Parsend was born on September 11, 1872 in Salem, Township, Wyandot, Ohio.

Now that we have discussed Fremont Nelson's birth family, we will share details about Fremont's life. He was born on July 27, 1877 in Salem Township, Wyandot, Ohio, and he later married Sarah Lavinia/Lovenia Robinson, the daughter of Susan N. Hawkins and William Robinson, on August 1, 1901 in Cuyahoga, Ohio. Their marriage record states that Fremont was a Cook and Sarah worked as a Domestic. Lovenia must have married a second time because her death record from July 16, 1947 lists her as Lovenia Butler and the daughter of Susie Hawkins and William Roberson (Robinson). Her death record also states that she was 71 years old and living in Hamtramck, Michigan.

According to Fremont Everett Nelson's WWI Draft Registration Card, for his nearest relative it mentions his foster mother, Sarah Brown of Amherstburg. A few years later, we also see Fremont living with Sarah Brown as listed in the 1921 Census, along with Margaret Nall, the daughter of Sarah E. (Brown) and James Nall, who both sadly passed away.

His WWI Draft Registration Card also lists Fremont as a cook and his employer was Shenango Furnace Co. The *Amherstburg Echo* also mentions Fremont's work as a cook. On December 16, 1905, the newspaper said, "Fremont Nelson will keep ship on the steam line of Hover & Mason at Duluth this winter." Also, on December 17, 1909, it mentions that he was working for the steamer John Staunton and had returned to Amherstburg for the winter, while on December 28, 1928 it mentions he worked as a chef on the steamer Harry W. Croft. Decades later, another article titled "Given An Even Break The Atomic Will Again Win" mentions Fremont. This article discusses details of the Third Annual International Tugboat Race. The winner of this race was the tugboat called the "Atomic," which defeated the "Patricia McQueen." The *Amherstburg Echo* also shares details of the crew's reception and says "Welcome Tugs – The reception was set for six o'clock and before the time hundreds had gathered at the Government Docks to welcome the Atomic. The afternoon had been a wet one and rain was threatening however this did not interfere with the welcome. At the dock were the South Essex Associated Boys' Band, the Amherstburg Fire Department, the Amherstburg High School Cadet Band and a large group of citizens. Open cars were provided for the members of the crews of the Atomic and Patricia McQueen."

The article continues by saying "Under the direction of C. Devere Thrasher, Marshall, the parade formed and its route followed north on Dalhousie Street to Richmond Street, east on Richmond to Sandwich Street and north on Sandwich Street to the town park where the

ceremonies were held with F.T. Pickering as master-of-ceremonies. The loyalty of the citizens for the town to Captain McQueen and his associates was shown that in spite of a fairly heavy fall of rain all remained until the program had been finished. As a token of appreciation Captain McQueen was presented with a silver tray. The presentation was made by F.T. Pickering. The wives of the crew members of the Atomic were presented with flowers and the crew members of the Patricia McQueen received individual gifts as did Fremont Nelson, chef of the Atomic.”

Interestingly, Fremont also appears in an advertisement for Peninsular Ranges in the *Amherstburg Echo*. The ad says “The above list of happy patrons speaks for itself. The Range sells itself. – J. David Burk, Hardware and Stoves. Amherstburg.” Among those listed as happy patrons is Fremont Nelson.

Fremont was involved in several organizations in Amherstburg including a group called the Sunshine Society. On April 28, 1911, the *Amherstburg Echo* printed that “The scholars of the Baptist Sunday school have organized a Sunshine society with the following officers: - Pres., Fremont Nelson; vice-Pres., Mrs. J.H. Gant; Sec., Miss Azalia Kirtly; Assit. Sec., Miss Blanche Smith; Treasurer, Charles Jones. The object of the society is to look after the sick of the school.”

Fremont was also a member of the Lincoln Lodge, No. 8 A.F. & A.M. which was the Amherstburg chapter of the Prince Hall Masonic lodge of Free and Accepted Masons, which was the international Masonic order for Black Canadians and Americans. An important note. This separate lodge for Black Canadians and Americans existed because they were not accepted into white Masonic lodges. On January 11, 1901, the *Amherstburg Echo* shared the list of newly elected officers of the Lincoln Lodge which includes Fremont E. Nelson, along with others such as Henry Banks jr., Peter Stokes, Leonard Saunders and J.S.H. Brown. In 1923, Fremont is also mentioned as a member of Ebenezer Chapter No. 4, of the Holy Royal Arch Masons, which held

their election of officers on March 27th of that year (1923). Among those elected and installed were “Comp. D.J. Holbert, H.P.; Comp. Leroy H. Banks, King; Comp. Alonzo Harris Comp. F.E. Nelson, G.M. of 3rd V.”

The following year, in 1924, Fremont Nelson is once again mentioned in connection to the Lincoln Lodge, which hosted a St. Valentine’s Ball. Details of this event are printed in the *Amherstburg Echo* which says “Lincoln Lodge, No. 8, F&A.M. annual entertainment in the form of a St. Valentine’s masquerade ball, was held on the 14th of February in the town hall, Amherstburg. Putting the facts mildly, to say the least, this was the most successful event of the season. Fun and merriment prevailed. About 200 persons took part in the entertainment. Lee’s orchestra outdid itself furnishing music up to the minute continuously from 8:30 to 5 o’clock. The prizes offered furnished quite a novelty, and were well received by the audience. The ladies’ first prize was won by Miss Dorothea Simpson, whose Pierrette or Ballet costume met with the approval of the judges ... Geo. D. McCurdy was recipient of first gentlemen’s prize for the oddity of his costume ... The judges were Rolan Austin, of Detroit; Mrs. Lucy Lynn and Mrs. Pearl Hulbert, of Ypsilanti, and Leroy N. McCurdy, of Conneaut, Ohio. It is only fair to mention that Mrs. Willard Maeirs was dressed as a gentleman entertainer, and that she was declared by everyone in attendance to be the cutest boy in the hall – a perfect dream. Among the out-of-town visitors were Mrs. Pearl Hulbert and Mrs. Lucy Lynn, of Ypsilanti, Mich.; Mrs. Elizabeth Saunders, of Ann Arbor; Leroy N. McCurdy, of Conneaut, Ohio; Dr.’s Thompson and Plummer, of Detroit; Dr.’s H.D. Taylor and W.C. Kelly, and others of Windsor. The many costumes were varied and distinctive. The committees in charge of deserving of great credit for the social event. It was the expressed desire of the out-of-town participants that entertainments of this nature be repeated semi-annually. The decorations were superb colored bunting entwined with the Union

Jack and Stars and Stripes under the supervision of Henry Hall and his assistants. The committee is very thankful to the members of Rose Lodge, who so kindly left their decorations intact in the dance hall. Refreshments were amply served to the assemblage under the supervision of Freemount [sic] Nelson and William Hulm and their assistants. Nothing prevailed to mar the enjoyment of the merry-makers from beginning to end.”

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 another amazing family.