

## The Law-Abiding and Law Enforcing Banks Family – Part 1

Did you know the Banks family was prominent in the Harrow/Colchester area during the 1800s and early 1900s, and can trace their Canadian roots back to 1831 with the arrival of William Erving/ Irving Banks, the son of Anthony and Nancy Banks? William Erving was born circa 1807 and originated from Virginia, where he came from a family of Free Blacks. This also included his siblings Harvil, Erling, Eaton, Washington, Straudy, Lucretia, Sie and Mirracy. William Erving married Esther Malawice (Fields) Banks, who was born in Amherstburg on 14 June 1812. Her mother was Alamania, who originated from Ghana, West Africa, and was a cook for Isaac Brock. Family lore says that Isaac Brock is the alleged father of Esther, but this has not proven fact. Have you ever heard this legend before? William and Esther had five children: Anthony, Erving Jr., John, Martha and Thomas. Each of their children have their own interesting histories which is what we are going to discuss today.

There are so many interesting resources available at the Amherstburg Freedom Museum which can tell a person a lot about their history including the *Biographical Directory of Essex County* for 1881 which lists Erving S. Jr. as a farmer and county constable. Ever wonder where he lived in Colchester? Erving owned 150 acres of Lot 16 in Colchester North, which, in 1881, was valued at \$5,000, which increased to \$6,000 at the time of his passing on 25 August 1893. That is a lot of money even by today's standards. Erving and his first wife, Mary Jane, had nine children and in his obituary, it states "When a young man, he bought some land in Colchester North from the Canada Company and cleared it. He followed sailing for an occupation until the past few years. He was first married to Mary Jane, daughter of the late WM. MCCURDY, of Colchester South, and she died about seven years ago, leaving four daughters, all of whom are residing in Windsor." Erving was the first Black member of the Harrow Town Council and a

school trustee of S.S. No. 1 in Colchester North. As sad as they can be, it is amazing what interesting details you can learn from a person's obituary. If you are ever considering looking into your family history, a good place to start is in a newspaper's obituary section.

Erving's siblings included ... Stayed tuned for next week's edition to learn more about the Banks Family.