

## The Law-Abiding and Law Enforcing Banks Family – Part 4

Anthony and Susan's son W. Erving was born on 6 August 1863 and was married four times. First to Henrietta Bradford, second to Willa Ann, third was Mrs. Barnes and his fourth wife was Gertrude. He was also a chef with New York Central and Canadian National Railway for over 30 years and was known to meet "friends from South Essex on the International Limited, one of the ... trains of the C.N.R. system." The places and sites he must of visited. George was born on 7 February 1871 and married Carrie Simpson. They had a daughter, Viola. John and James owned a saloon in Saginaw, Michigan and James was also a chef for the Canadian National Railroad. Garnett, born on 5 April 1885, never married and was employed by the C.N.R. It was during one of his trips with the C.N.R. that he fell into a lake in Northern Ontario. He developed tuberculosis which sadly caused his death at 26. Anthony Jr. and Eli were born on 1 December 1886. Eli, also known as Todd, never married and farmed the family homestead. Susan and Anthony's other son, Gordon, was listed as living "in the west," possibly in Oakland, California, while Walter married a school teacher, Elvia Dixon of Windsor on 15 January 1897. They had no children, but Walter followed in his father's footsteps by becoming a County Constable. Walter also had a farm in Colchester North. Farming was common in the Banks family, as they farmed the land, raising cattle and chickens, growing fruits and vegetables, churning butter, producing flour and growing tobacco. Sounds like a very hard working family and that hard work paid off. Anthony Banks owned 116 acres of Lot 9 on Concession 3 in South Colchester, which was worth \$3,000.

Anthony's granddaughter, Cordella, wrote that the Banks' family home was "open to all who were either homeless or who needed temporary shelter. Thus, one could always find an assortment of friends or relatives who lived with the family from time to time." Cordella

mentions one specific example, “Uncle Ben” Murray, who escaped enslavement in Virginia and lived with the Banks family as an elderly man. Cordella recalls her mother’s memory of sitting for hours listening to Uncle Ben tell stories about his life while enslaved and how he, along with his brother, escaped to Canada “by following the ‘North Star’ and putting cayenne pepper in their tracks so the bloodhounds could not pursue them.” Their journey must have been terrifying. It clear is that the Banks family has within it significant history makers, particularly Anthony and Erving Jr. Their commitment to the community and their courage to lift themselves beyond the racial climate of nineteenth-century Essex County, often becoming the first Black citizen in their field, speaks volumes to their strength and determination. In a 1928 write up for Anthony Banks, it states that he lived by the personal philosophy that he would “rather wear out than rust out.” It seems that was a philosophy he shared with his family members.