

The Many Members of the Nall Family – Part 1

Desmond Tutu once said “You don’t choose your family. They are God’s gift to you, as you are to them.” In the Nall family there were many gifts, considering how many children were welcomed into this family. The Nall family’s connection to Amherstburg goes all the way back to Alfred and Ellen (Foster) Nall. Records state that Alfred was born in Kentucky in 1820 but came to Canada in 1860. Ellen’s place of birth is a bit trickier because some records, such as the Census, state that she was born in Ontario, while other documents such as death records state that she was born in Kentucky. The couple was married in Essex, Essex County on December 6, 1860 and their marriage record lists Ellen’s parents as Joseph and Mary Foster, while Alfred’s parents are listed as “not known.” Census records and notes from the museum’s family history collection state that Alfred was a gardener on Alma street in Amherstburg. Sadly, at some point during 1881 and 1891, Alfred passed away because the 1891 Census lists Ellen as a widow. Additionally, the following year, in 1892, Ellen married for a second time on September 22, 1892 in Amherstburg to George Shreve; she was 49 and he was 68. Their marriage record also states that George was born in Chester County, Pennsylvania and he was a farmer and widower. George’s parents were Samuel and Esther Shreve. While Ellen was married to her first husband, Alfred, the couple had 10 children: James, Theresa, Gordon, Elnora/Nora, Mattie Jane, Forrest, Hattie, Walter, Grace and George Foster.

Alfred and Ellen’s oldest son was James who was born in Amherstburg on November 16, 1861. He lived in Amherstburg for almost his entire life, until he moved to Windsor on Church Street, three years before he passed away in April 1920. In his early life, James was a chef on the Great Lakes and for a few years was a master chef on the flagship of the Northern Navigation Company. James also had a bakery on the corner of Seymore and Gore streets in Amherstburg

which is an occupation he held until his retirement. In 1911, to gain more business, James had an ad printed in the *Amherstburg Echo* that said, “Ladies, give us 24 hours’ notice and we will supply your parties with lemon, strawberry, pineapple or frozen fruit sherbets packed in freezers in quantities to suit. James A Nall, baker and confectioner, corner Seymore and Gore streets.”

James was married twice: first to Sarah Brown and then to Minnie Odey/O’Dey. James’ first wife Sarah was born in Anderdon on September 6, 1861 and was the daughter of John D. Brown (born in Maryland) and Sarah Chancellor (born in Ohio). Sarah and James married on April 18, 1888 in Amherstburg’s First Baptist Church and the ceremony was conducted by the Reverend J.A. Holt. According to the *Amherstburg Echo*, their wedding was the largest church wedding solemnized there considering “The body of the church, the choir platform and the pulpit were all fully occupied to witness the important event.” The couple had two children: Margaret Ellen Louis who was born on March 9, 1897 and James Chancellor Nall who was born on June 24, 1892. Sadly, Sarah passed away in Amherstburg on September 18, 1910 due to heart and kidney issues. She was described as popular throughout her life and “became endeared to a large number by her untiring devotion to the path of duty, her kindness and quiet work both in church and the Sabbath school.” Sarah was very devoted to her organizational work within and outside of the church. She acted as treasurer for the First Baptist Church in 1896, joined the Amherstburg Ladies Sewing Circle and the Amherstburg Guild (which stemmed from the Baptist Church), in addition to becoming a charter member and Royal Grand Matron of Amherstburg’s Ruth Chapter #4, Order of the Eastern Star. Her memorial described her as “a loyal supporter of ... the societies of which she was identified.” **There is still more to learn about James and the rest of the Nall family. See you next week!**