

The Mulder Family Part 1 – Military Man

- Mulder ancestor is the first known Black resident in Colchester. Read more below.

Did you know that Black Canadians have been serving and protecting Canada for centuries? A member of our next family, the Mulder family, is an early example of this. It was John Joseph Mulder whose military service goes all the way back to the early 1800s when he fought in the 1837-38 Upper Canada Rebellion as a member of Captain Caldwell's Company of Colored Volunteers. The 1837-38 Rebellions occurred in Upper and Lower Canada and was a result of political unrest that developed soon after the War of 1812. This caused resistance against the British Crown, which ruled the colonies of Upper and Lower Canada. There were numerous Black soldiers who were loyalists and they assisted in defending against rebel attacks.

According to Irene Moore Davis' article "Canadian Black Settlements in the Detroit River Region", found in the book *A Fluid Frontier: Slavery, Resistance and the Underground Railroad in the Detroit River Borderland*, "In December 1837, during the 1837-38 Mackenzie Rebellion, the Reverend Josiah Henson's company of black volunteers attached to the Essex Militia was part of the group that captured the rebel schooner *Anne* and made prisoners of its crew ... Josiah Henson's unit defended Fort Malden [in Amherstburg] from Christmas 1837 to May 1838, and another company of 123 black volunteers, Captain Caldwell's Coloured Corps, was subsequently stationed there for two months. The black volunteers showed such bravery that Lieutenant Governor Sir Francis Bond Head commented on their service in his remarks to the legislature of Upper Canada in March 1838."

Irene Davis Moore adds that "interracial relations in Amherstburg were not entirely rosy: in 1835, paranoid white residents petitioned the government of Upper Canada not to remove British troops from Fort Malden, fearing that they would be left defenseless against 'the very

numerous and troublesome black populations ... who are almost daily violating the laws.’” This point is further proof of the discrimination that Black Canadians endured and yet they still defended Canada.

John Joseph Mulder is among these brave Black Canadians and the following pages share his and his family’s story. According to Milo Johnson’s book, *New Canaan*, John Joseph Mulder arrived in the Colchester area between 1810 and 1820 and was known as the first Black person to reside in the township. He was born into slavery sometime between 1776-1781 in Maryland and escaped in the early 1800s. John’s wife Emily was born circa 1796 in Virginia. Several years after he arrived in Canada, John and Emily purchased 40 acres on Gore Road (Lot 5) in 1839. He later sold this land and purchased 60 acres on Lot 9 on Gore Road.

By 1851, the couple had a farm consisting of 22 acres in crops, 2 acres of pasture, 2 acres of orchards and 34 acres of woodland. By 1861 they had 50 acres of farmland. You might be wondering why their acreage decreased. It is because John and Emily’s son Joseph Jr. purchased 10 acres from them. That same year, 1861, the Census for Colchester lists John, Emily, and their children: James, John (Joseph), Harriet and Emily. Not mentioned is their daughter Rachael who was born in 1828.

As mentioned, John Joseph Sr. and Emily’s son John Joseph Mulder Jr. purchased 10 acres from his parents and operated a farm there. He also farmed his father’s land after he passed away, but it should be added that Emily remained the owner of this land until her passing in the late 1880s. Following Emily’s passing, John Jr. was willed the land. He is who we will discuss in part 2.

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.