

The Nolan Family Part 1 – Indigenous Roots

For this month's edition of our family history series, members of the Nolan/Chickee family including AFM Board President Monty Logan generously shared information on their ancestors from the Nolan family who will be highlighted throughout December. We begin with Thomas Nolan Sr. who was born in Essex County circa 1801. According to Milo Johnson's book, *Mystery of New Canaan*, Thomas is listed as English in the 1851 Census, but he was also Indigenous and lived on the Huron Reserve in Malden Township. Thomas married a woman named Harriet. The couple had three children: Ellenor/Ellen, Thomas and George. The 1851 Personal Census does not list Thomas' wife, but mentions Thomas Jr. and George.

Thomas Sr. served with Captain John Caldwell's Company in the Rebellion of 1837-1838. 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."

Thomas and Harriet owned land in Colchester South Township that was deeded to them on May 8, 1854. It contained 62 and a half acres on Lot 5 South of Malden Road and each of Thomas's children inherited his land. According to Thomas Sr.'s death record from July 1, 1871,

he was a farmer and died at the age of 63 after being kicked by a horse. Nolan family documents share a further description stating that Thomas “was at work plowing, and bent down to remove an accumulation of mud from the horse’s shoe, when the horse, without warning, kicked him in the head, the iron shoe hitting his skull causing his death.”

There was no information available for Thomas’ son George, but an article called “Just Folks” from 1990, found in the Museum collection’s Nolan family history binder, mentions that a woman named Ellen (Nolan) Boyd was the daughter of Thomas Nolan Sr. and Harriet. Ellen was born in Malden (Amherstburg) on March 2, 1835. She married John Boyd on December 19, 1850 and had eleven children. Her 1890 obituary in the *Amherstburg Echo* lists her children: “William Ernest Trueman, of Pleasant Valley; Mrs. Maria Baylis, of Malden, Mrs. Rachel Brown, Mrs. Esther Freeman and Miss Ellen Boyd, of Detroit, Mich.: Margaret of Toledo, Anthora, of Jackson; Lewis, Andrew, Thomas and George Nolan of New Canaan, Colchester North, survive her and mourn the loss of a loving and affectionate ... mother.”

A further note about some of Ellen’s children. Nolan family records list additional children including John, Edward, Anthony, Alfred, Emanuel, Tryman and Hester (possibly Esther). Hester Malvina married Robert Sylvester Freeman, while Maria Ann married Robert Baylis on August 14, 1875 in Colchester South. Maria and Robert had several children including Robert, Elisha, John, Herman, Ellen, Pearl, Cora, Hattie and Josephus. Maria’s brother Andrew married Lillian Wilson and had at least three children: Margaret Jennett, Tollivet John and Andrew.

There was a wealth of information for Thomas Sr.’s next child, Thomas Jr. He settled on a farm in New Canaan (Colchester North) and married twice. He married Sarah Jones in 1898, but before that married Mary Jane Brown-Reid (also spelt Reed) who, according to their

marriage record from December 25, 1858, was the daughter of Samuel and Polly (Pelletier) Brown. Polly was the daughter of Louis Theophile Pelletier and Theresa Catherine Renaud. Thomas Jr. and Mary Jane had at least eight children: George, Alexander, Francis, Isaac, Tracy Adalina, Henry and Lance. There may have been another child named Dominique, which lists Thomas Nolon/Nolan and Mary Jane Reid as his parents in January 1872 in Colchester. No further information was available on Dominique. Additionally, a marriage record for a John F. Nolen, list his parents as Thomas H. Nolan and Mary J. Reed. The marriage record also lists John's wife Maria Winslow Chippre or Clifford, the daughter of John W. Chippre/Clifford and Jane Fisher on October 13, 1890 in Detroit.

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.