

The Walking Preacher of the Binga Family – Part 1

Amherstburg is an incredibly historic place with numerous spaces that pay tribute to the many contributions of African Canadians, including places like churches. Among those churches is the First Baptist Church on George Street which is a shining example of the hard work and dedication of the Binga family. The church's existence can be attributed to the Reverend Anthony Binga Sr., who was also known as *The Walking Preacher* and *The Father of the Black Baptists*. Anthony Binga Sr. was born into slavery in Green County, Kentucky. In 1895, he was interviewed by Wilbur H. Siebert, the author of *The Underground Railroad, From Slavery to Freedom*. During the interview, Elder Binga explained, "John Bucknel was my first owner, and when I was 6 years old, he sold my family to General Taylor, an uncle of Zachary Taylor [12th President of the United States]. I never saw the day, since I knew anything that I didn't want to be free." He stayed true to his goal and in 1836, he escaped. It was after his brother found a pocket book with \$500 inside that Anthony and some of his relatives, including his brother, made their way to Amherstburg, Ontario with the assistance of Quakers and Underground Railroad operatives. The Binga family arrived 6 days after finding the pocket book that changed their fate. It was in Amherstburg that Anthony Binga Sr. was a conductor of the Underground Railroad and the First Baptist Church was a terminus in the Underground Railroad. When describing his time in Amherstburg, Binga wrote, "At Amherstburg, I kept a station. When we went there first, it was almost a miracle to see 15 coming there at one time, and a wonder when one came. A long time after, they would come 30 in a day, and after the Fugitive Slave Law took effect, by 50's every day like frogs in Egypt." Elder Binga adds that he, Issac Rice and Hiram Wilson assisted freedom seekers by providing them with provisions, taking care of them when they were sick, and helping to find them employment. Stayed tuned for Part 2.