

## **The Walking Preacher of the Binga Family – Part 4**

Another well-known member of the Binga family was Jesse Binga, who was born in Detroit on April 10, 1865 to William and Adelpia (Lewis) Binga. William was born in Kentucky and he was a barber. He also built temporary housing for migrating freedom seekers travelling from the South, escaping to Canada and free territory in the States. The street where these houses were located, in Detroit, was called “Binga Row” and it was Adelpia who supervised these houses. The purpose of these temporary, low cost houses was to give African Americans the opportunity to save enough money in order to either purchase permanent housing in the area or continue on their journey. It is thought that William was either a first cousin or uncle to Anthony Sr. and Daniel. William and Adelpia’s son Jesse married Eudora Johnson and followed in his father’s footsteps in multiple fields. Not only did he become a barber for a time, but he also settled in Chicago in 1893. It was there that he purchased run-down buildings which he repaired and rented. In 1921, Jesse opened the Binga State Bank, which had deposits in excess of \$200,000, which is extremely impressive, especially for that time. Within three years the bank had deposits of over \$1.3 million. What made this bank so significant was that it gave an alternative to white-owned banks that often discriminated against Black residents. Additionally, the Binga State Bank provided job opportunities and experience for numerous African Americans who were often refused the chance to work in banks.

The years to follow would have highs and lows. Jesse was an incredibly brave person, considering he moved his family to an all-white neighbourhood. Sadly, they experienced racism on a regular basis including having their house bombed five times in 1919. In 1929, Jesse Binga also opened a five-story office building called the Arcade Building. The following year, in 1930,

the Binga State Bank closed as a result of the Depression. Jesse remained in Chicago for the rest of his life. He passed away on June 13, 1950.

Did you know Amherstburg Freedom Museum Board Member, Barbara K. Smith, Ph.D., is the great, great, great niece of the Reverend Anthony Binga Sr. who was discussed at the beginning of this family history? Currently, Barbara is the Director of Guidance and Counseling for Detroit Public Schools. Some of her current and past affiliations include organizations such as the Essex County Black Historical Research Society (Charter Member); Hour-A-Day Study Club; African Diaspora Scholarship Endowment Committee, University of Windsor; Women's Committee, & Friends Committee (Executive Board), Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History; Fred Hart Williams Genealogical Society (Past Board Member and Life Member) and a charter member of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH) in Detroit, Michigan. Barbara is a proud descendant of the Binga family and shared her family's history in a video involving descendants of the Underground Railroad; a video that can be found at the Amherstburg Freedom Museum or on our Facebook page. Thanks for joining us for the Binga Family History. Stay tuned for next week where we will introduce another family.