

A Full Family Tree – The Hurst Family (Through Ransom’s Line) – Part 1

The Hurst family’s history in Essex County, particularly the Amherstburg and Colchester area, go back many generations beginning with Ransom Hurst and his wife Ellen Matthews who were married around 1844. Ransom came to Colchester through Amherstburg from Ohio, most likely before 1845 and the earliest record for Ransom and Ellen in Essex County goes back to 1851 with the Personal Census for the Township of Colchester. It lists Ransom and Ellen, along with their children: William, who was 5 at the time, Solomon (4), Hilliard (2) and Lydia/Lydy Ann (1). This census also tells us that Ransom was a farmer who was born in the United States. At the time, he is listed as 28, meaning that he was born in roughly 1823, while Ellen was born in roughly 1831, considering she was 20 years old at the time of this Census. It is in the next Personal Census for 1861 that we see the addition of four more children: Sarah, Almeda, Ellen and Henry. This is not including four more children in the 1871 Census under the household of “Ranson Herst” which includes Emery, Caledonia, Luenda/Lucinda and Philip. This example raises a good point about researching family members. Often the names of family members are spelt incorrectly, but a comparison of other family members listed in the census record can help you confirm whether the person is correct or not. For example, even though Ransom is listed as “Ranson Herst” in the 1871 Census for Colchester, we also see that his wife Ellen and children are listed as well, which helps us confirm his identity.

Ten years later, with the 1881 Census, there are two more children added including George (10 years old) and Almede (7), which is a similar name to Almeda, but their ages don’t match up: Almeda has a birth year of 1856, while Almede was born circa 1874. This is too big of a gap in years to conclude that they are the same person, meaning that they either had similar names or Almede’s name was spelt incorrectly. Additionally, some sources also state that there was a

Ransom Jr., but he does not appear on the census with the rest of his family. In total Ransom and Ellen had at least 14 children: William, Solomon, Hilliard, Lydia Ann, Sarah, Almeda, Ellen, Henry, Emery, Caledonia, Lucinda, Philip, George and Almede. Sadly, the 1881 Census lists Ransom as a widower, revealing that his wife Ellen had passed away within the last ten years, between the 1871 and 1881 Census.

There is information available for nine of Ransom and Ellen's children (William, Hilliard, Sarah, Henry, Emery, Caledonia, Lucinda, George and Almede), which is what we will discuss first. The oldest child of Ransom and Ellen was William. On June 23, 1877, he married Henrietta Artis who was the daughter of Amanda and Mathew Artis. At the time, William was a farm labourer in Colchester where he was born. William was also 28 when he married, while Henrietta was 19. William's brother Hilliard is the next oldest child, but his direct line is traced the most extensively and makes up the majority of this family history, so to avoid confusion Hilliard will be discussed after his other siblings. Hilliard's sister Sarah married James George Morgan and the couple lived in Windsor, while Sarah's brother Henry was born circa 1859 in Harrow. He married Alzora Lewis on June 2, 1884 and Alzora was the daughter of Matthew and Eliza Lewis. On their marriage record, Henry is listed as a farmer and 23 years of age, while Alzora, who was also born in Harrow, was 16. Henry's brother Emery was born circa 1861, but sadly died quite young at the age of 38 on September 28, 1899 in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Emery was married to Harriet "Hattie" Henry and lived in Ann Arbor, Washtenaw, Michigan.

Emery's sister Caledonia was, according to her death record, born on December 25, 1862 and later married Frank Schuran on March 23, 1914 in Detroit, Michigan. Her husband Frank was a labourer who was born on February 9, 1873 in Kansas and was the son of Henry and Eliza Schuran. Frank was 41 at the time of their marriage, while Caledonia was 42. Both Frank and

Caledonia were previously married: on their marriage record Caledonia is also listed with the last name “Marshall.” The same thing occurs on Caledonia’s brother George’s obituary which also lists her as Mrs. Marshall. Additionally, on her death record she is listed as Caledonia Bennett, meaning she married a third time. Next is Caledonia’s sister Lucinda who married William Marshall and lived in Colchester South. Similar to Emery, George also passed away at a young age. According to his March 1899 obituary, George passed away at 28 years of age and was also married. Three years before his passing he married Cora Coats and the couple had two children, one being 2 years old and the other only six weeks. George’s sister Almede married Albert Lewis and lived in the Colchester Township area.

A Full Family Tree – The Hurst Family – Part 2

As mentioned, the majority of this family history traces the direct line of Ransom and Ellen’s son Hilliard Sr., so he is discussed last to avoid confusion. Hilliard Sr. was born on March 29, 1850 in Colchester South and was quite the businessman. He purchased the Wilkes Baptist Church located in the Matthews Settlement and moved it to land he purchased on Lot 10 in Hillsville, next to the railway tracks on the 3rd Concession. This building was referred to by locals as Hilliard’s Hall and was used as a space for meetings and social events, but it may also have been used as a restaurant and ice cream shop. The *Amherstburg Echo* mentions that Hilliard was to “open an ice cream parlor at Hillsville on June 12th, [1924] and will continue every Thursday and Saturday during the warm weather, selling ice cream and all kinds of soft drinks.” The *Amherstburg Echo* also reported that Hilliard was opening a restaurant and it is most likely that Hilliard’s Hall was the location of the restaurant and ice cream shop. After reading this you might be asking yourself, where was Hillsville? It was a name used by Black residents in Essex County which described a concentration of Black residents living on the

3rd Concession. The community, according to Milo Johnson, “stretched westward, from 3rd Concession at the Richmond drain, towards the McLean Side Road, east of Walker Road; and from Roseborough, near 3rd Concession, it stretched north towards the 4th Concession.” Hillsville had two main churches: Mount Calvary Church of God in Christ (Baptist Church) and Central Grove on the corner of the 4th Concession and Walker Road. Hilliard was very active in the community and was referred to as the “Mayor of Hillsville.”

In addition to opening a few businesses, Hilliard was also a farmer who married Manda/Amanda Minerva Chavis who was born circa 1852 and the daughter of Wiley and Clarissa Ann (Evans) Chavis, who were married on July 5, 1841 in Clark County, Illinois. According to Milo Johnson’s book, *New Canaan: Freedom Land*, “the fact that their [Clarissa and Wylie’s] marriage is registered indicates they were ‘Free People’ living in Illinois or neighboring Indiana.” Wiley and Clarissa arrived in Essex County some time between 1849 and 1852, most likely landing at Amherstburg and settling in New Canaan, Colchester North in Essex County. The 1861 Personal Census for Colchester lists Manda and her siblings which included: William, James, John, Nancy, Thomas, Eveline, Sarah, Louisa, Mary, and Theresa. Clarissa Chavis later married Henry Artis in June of 1874, so it is most likely that Wiley passed away shortly before that. It was over a decade later, in 1887, that Clarissa passed away.

On the marriage record for Manda and Hilliard, the former is listed as Manda Runells, not Chavis. The record states that she was a widow explaining the different last name, but “Runells” is a misspelling of “Reynolds” from a previous marriage to William Henry Reynolds. Manda and her first husband William had two children: Emaline who was born on May 3, 1872 and Alfred who was born on June 27, 1873. Both children were born before Manda’s second marriage to

Hilliard on March 24, 1875, meaning that William passed away between the birth of his second child Alfred, in 1873, and Manda's next marriage to Hilliard in 1875. During their marriage, Manda and Hilliard Sr. had at least seven children: Rhoda, Almeda, Ellen, Hilliard Jr., Blanche, Wylie and Everett Walter Farrington Hurst.

Rhoda was born in Harrow on October 31, 1876. According to her August 1, 1895 marriage record, she married a labourer named Henry Smith, who was born in Stratford, Ontario. Henry was the son of Kirk Smith and Larene Herrer, although Henry's mother's name might be Sarene or something similar, because the beginning of her name is cut off in the marriage record and it is difficult to determine her full name. At the time, Rhoda performed housework as her occupation and she was 20, while Henry was 32. Both lived and were married in Romeo, Michigan. According to the 1900 census, the couple moved to Armada, Michigan and that is where Rhoda remained until her passing on August 6, 1947. Over the years, the census records also reveal that Henry worked as a "teamster" in 1900, while the 1910 census states that Henry was a "labourer" who does "odd jobs," while Rhoda worked as a "Laundress" out of her house. Henry and Rhoda had at least one child, a son, named Clarence Henry who was born on December 4, 1895 in Romeo, Michigan. On Clarence's WWI draft registration card it states that he was 30, a "Common Labourer" and single. According to Clarence's draft registration card during WWII, he was age 46, living in Armada, MI, unemployed, 6 foot 2 inches tall, 145 pounds, with brown eyes and black hair. If photos do not exist for a person, records such as these are sometimes the next best thing in helping us to image what a person would look like. On the gravestone for Clarence H. Smith it says CO.C. 372 INF (Infantry) U.S. Army. The gravestone also states that he passed away in 1942, meaning that he was likely killed in action during the war, but it must be added that Clarence is not listed on the National Archives WWII

Army Casualties list for Macomb, Michigan where he is from. It remains unclear what happened to him.

Rhoda's sister Almeda is the next person to be discussed. She was born circa 1877 in Colchester South to Hilliard and Manda Hurst. On April 18, 1898, she married Albert Lewis who was born in Colchester South and the son of Matthew Lewis and Eliza Simpson. According to their marriage record, Almeda worked as a "domestic" while Albert was a "cook." The couple had one daughter named Eliza who was born on July 17, 1898. She married a carpenter named William Scott, who was the son of Henry Scott and Mary Hill. The couple was married on September 19, 1917.

There is little information available on Almeda's sister Ellen, but she does show up on the 1891 Census for Colchester South and is 12 years old, meaning that she was born circa 1879. There is more information about the rest of her siblings: Hilliard Jr., Blanche, Wylie and Everett who we will discuss next. Hilliard Jr. was married at least two times. His first marriage was to Rose Thermond on October 13, 1906 in Windsor. Hilliard was 24 and worked as a "Porter" at the time of their marriage, while Rose was 19 and the daughter of James Thermond and S. Scott. Neither had been married before. According to Hilliard's 1912-1913 Immigration record, he was widowed, meaning that his first wife Rose passed away some time before 1912-1913. His immigration record also states that he entered Detroit with the destination of Cheboygan. Hilliard's second marriage was to Goldie Burch on November 12, 1913. According to their marriage record, Hilliard Jr., a labourer, was 30 and living in Detroit, while Goldie was 25 and living in Flint. Goldie was the daughter of Richard and Maggie Burch. Their marriage record also states that there was "No Ceremony."

According to the 1891 Census for Colchester South, Hilliard Jr.'s sister Blanche was born circa 1883 because she is listed as 8 years old at the time of the census. Her brother Everett was born, according to his death certificate, on October 30, 1886 in Harrow. He later married Fannie L. Laster, who was born in Georgia, the daughter of L.L. Laster (mother's name not given) and was a cook. The couple married on January 8, 1910 in Ann Arbor, Michigan, and at the time, Everett worked as a "Porter."

A Full Family Tree – The Hurst Family – Part 3

The last of the siblings we will discuss before moving on to the next generation is Wylie Hurst. Although Wylie was older than Everett, he is discussed last because his children make up the next section of the Hurst family history. Wylie was born in 1885 and later married Martha Thompson who was born in Colchester North on November 30, 1887. She was the daughter of Elijah Thompson, a farmer born on February 14, 1860, and Elsie Golden, a "housewife" born on November 5, 1870. Elijah and Elsie had 13 children: George Henry (b. July 28, 1885), Elsie Jane (August 9, 1889), Daniel Lee (Miscarriage at 7 months), William Raleigh (May 25, 1892), Enoch Elias (May 10, 1894), Andrew Theodore (November 4, 1896), Eliza Elizabeth (October 3, 1898), Linnie Josephine (April 23, 1900), Lawrence German (November 11, 1902), Florence Gertrude Ives (July 25, 1905), Verna Almeda (January 5, 1907), and Elijah Sufise (July 28, 1908), in addition to Martha.

Martha Thompson's father Elijah also has an interesting connection to the Amherstburg Freedom Museum because he was the youngest child of Elizabeth Ford (born in London, England) and George Henry Thompson Sr., of East Malden. According to family lore, George Sr. was from Madagascar, but before coming to Canada, he lived in Boone County, Kentucky. He came into Canada at Trois Rivieres, Quebec and worked as a coachman for an English gentleman named

Mr. Ford. According to family stories, George ran away with Mr. Ford's daughter Elizabeth and settled in East Malden. They were married and had fifteen children. George Henry Thompson was also an expert Blacksmith and wagon carriage maker and potter, by trade. His occupation as a Blacksmith is what connects George Sr. to the museum, because the Hurst family donated a plow that was forged by George Sr. and that plow is on display at the museum in the Taylor Cabin.

Wylie and Martha Hurst married on February 24, 1906 in Colchester South, the former being 21 while the latter was 18 years of age. According to an article published in the *Amherstburg Echo* titled "Going 21 Years" Wylie Hurst "has attained his majority as mail carrier in this district and is still going strong. For twenty-one years he has been serving patrons or carrying mail to post office and this Christmas tide had the lightest mail he ever carried at that time. Mr. Hurst recalls that during many Christmas seasons he found it necessary to put on two rigs to carry surplus mails. This year it is quite light in keeping with all kinds of business. There are not as many Christmas presents as usual being sent by mail, but that's no reason why people shouldn't show their appreciation of Mr. Hurst's service, and in fact, the service of all the carriers by leaving presents in their mail boxes." In addition to being a mail carrier, Wylie also worked for Ford Motor Company in Windsor.

The couple had nine children: Lornie (Sr.), Douglas, Sylvia, Wylie Jr., Wava (passed away at age 8 in 1924), Lonnie (passed away at 3 months in 1915), Greta, Burnie and Gladys (passed away at age 1 year, 2 months in 1925). Lornie Sr. was born on March 17, 1907 in Colchester South. On March 18, 1932, Lornie married Ida Evelyn Grayer, of Harrow, who was the daughter of Wiley Sylvester Grayer (son of William and Elizabeth Green Grayer) and Maude Louella Coates (Mulder) who married in April 1900. Wiley and Maude were also born in Harrow.

Wiley and Maude Grayer lived on a farm on Gore Road on the 2nd Concession and had sixteen children: Estelle Mae (1900), Mazie Luella (1902), Ruby Beatrice (1903), Virgil Sylvester (1905), Olive Marie (1907), Lovedy Bernetta (1909), Helen Josephine (1910), Wilfred (1911), Ida Evelyn (August 14, 1911), Gerald (1915), Sylvana (born circa 1916), Mary (born c. 1918), Gladys Leone (born c. 1917), Violet Winifred (1916), Marvin Lester (1918), and Kenneth (1920). Wiley Grayer was one of the first mail carriers in Colchester South Township in the early 1900s and delivered mail on Rural Route 2 and Rural Route 4. Wiley and Maude delivered the mail by horse buggy at first, but in 1920 Wiley purchased a car that made things easier.

A Full Family Tree – The Hurst Family – Part 4

Lornie Sr. and Evelyn Grayer Hurst even celebrated their 55th wedding anniversary on March 18, 1987 with their family. Their union brought 11 children: Lornie Jr., Maynard, Delores, Evonne, Virgil, Carole, Wayne, Priscilla, Beverly, Larry and Calvin. Lornie Jr. was born on January 7, 1933 and married Doreen Harris, the daughter of Ernest Harris, in October 1951 and had a daughter, Lorna Kaye. Later, Lornie Jr. married Jean Mildred Morrison (deceased) who was born on April 30, 1935 and was the daughter of Roy and Ada Mae Morrison. Lornie Jr. and Jean had ten children: Tyron, Heidi, Treasure, Joi, Judi, Rodney (deceased), Faith, Cindy, Kevin and Katherine (deceased). Lornie Jr. later married Dorothy Miller (deceased) and had a son, Demario.

Lornie Jr.'s brother Maynard was born on November 9, 1934 and married Marva Joan Mulder of Harrow on October 3, 1959. The couple have five children: Jeffrey, Darrel Kim (sadly passed away in 2006), Derrick, Darla and Monique. Maynard worked for Union Gas for 35 years and 10 months, retiring on February 1, 1995. He is now the pastor at Mount Beulah Church which is located just down the street from the Amherstburg Freedom Museum.

Maynard's sister Delores was born on April 8, 1936 and married Earl Bradford, while Evonne was born on August 18, 1937 and married Nathaniel Ellis of Detroit, later becoming a Goodin. Virgil was born on May 8, 1939 and married June MacLean, the daughter of Colin and Dorothy MacLean. Virgil and June were married for 51 years and had five children: Raymond, Virgil Jr., Darcy, Derrick and Sheri Riley, who married the Reverend Paul Riley (son of Bishop Lionel Riley) on June 4, 1994. Virgil was a Lab Tech for Ford Motor Company and retired after 43 years of service. Virgil's sister Carole was born on June 8, 1940 and married George Fitzhugh of Washington D.C. and later Curtis Pearson, while her brother Wayne was born on August 15, 1942. Wayne married Dora Mae Robart, the daughter of Don Robart of Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, and the couple had three children: Raquel, Kerry and Laine. Wayne pursued a career in the automotive industry, later becoming the CAW Benefits Representative at Ford Motor Company. From 1985 to 1994 he also served as an Amherstburg Town Councillor as well as Reeve. In 1997 he was elected as Amherstburg's first Black Mayor, being re-elected in 2003 and 2006. Next is Wayne's sister Priscilla who was born on December 19, 1943 and she married Louis Felton, while sister Beverly was born on May 29, 1945 and married Richard Haddock. Larry was born on December 23, 1947 and married Rhonda, while his brother Calvin was born on April 11, 1951 and married Janice Richardson, later Joanne.

Now that we've discussed Lornie Sr. and his children, we can go back to his siblings, including his brother Douglas who was born on February 20, 1909 on Lot 11 in Gore. Douglas married Berdina Talbert, the daughter of Arthur and Bertha Talbert. Berdina's parents hosted a bridal shower for the couple who were surrounded by a "large number of friends gathered to extend their felicitations and tender gifts to the bride and groom and wish them many years of happy wedded life. Elder Morton, of Windsor, voiced the good wishes of the gathering in a short

address. After some time spent in social intercourse a dainty lunch was served.” The couple had several children including Douglas, Andrew, Wave, Rose, Sylvia, Gloria, Patricia, Francis, Ralph, Thomas, Clarence, Pamela and Agnes.

There is not much information available on Douglas’ sister Sylvia Beulah, but she was born on August 11, 1911 in Harrow, while her brother Wylie Jr. was born on June 4, 1913 and married Margaret Ethel Bishop. He also worked at Ford Motor Company. Wylie Jr.’s sister Greta married a member of the Taylor family, Lloyd, of Harrow, on December 21, 1936. Greta’s bridesmaid was Zella Talbot, while Lloyd’s brother Chester was the best man. Greta, who was born on May 27, 1918, and Lloyd, who was born on April 12, 1915, lived on Lloyd’s father’s farm on Highway 18 in Harrow, but later purchased their own farm on Walker Road in Harrow, which is just north of Wylie and Martha Hurst’s farm on Walker Road. According to Greta and Lloyd’s son, Michael, the couple worked their farm and during harvest time would sell their produce at the Detroit market. Greta and her son Marvyn also used to sell and deliver ice to the residents of Colchester South from their ice boxes. It was in 1949 that Greta and Lloyd moved to Sarnia where Lloyd owned a produce business in Sarnia until he passed away in May 1971. Greta also had a cleaning business until her passing on February 17, 1999 in Sarnia.

The couple had six children: Marvyn (born September 30, 1937), Ann (December 3, 1939), Wallace (June 13, 1942), Rick (August 14, 1943), Wesley (April 30, 1944) and Michael Taylor (May 28, 1957). The first five children were all born in Harrow, while Michael Taylor was born in Sarnia. Marvyn married Shirley Travis of Chatham in November 1956, while Ann married Bob Brown of Chatham in May 1992. Wallace married Agnes Paigne from Windsor in 1984 and Rick married Audrey Dyer of Sarnia in 1969. Wesley married Rhonda from Dresden in 1968 and Michael married Lauren Gormandy from Port of Spain Trinidad in September 1981. Michael

married for a second time, to Michelle Mason from St. Helena, Trinidad in September 2000. Additionally, Michael worked for 30 years in Toronto as a Licensed Refrigeration, Air Conditioning, and Heating Mechanic and is now retired. His brother Marvyn owned and operated a lighting business and has since retired, living in Ottawa. Rick worked as a supervisor at Imperial Oil Refinery in Sarnia, while Wesley worked at Homes Foundry in Sarnia (passed away on February 28, 1988), and Wallace worked in the clothing business (passed away April 8, 2005).

The last Hurst sibling is Burnie Hurst. He married museum co-founder Betty Johnson (later Simpson) at a young age and the couple had a daughter, Joan Patricia, who was born on March 26, 1944. Joan first married Robert Browning and had two children: Janisse and Richard. Joan later married Charlie Bray as well. Betty later married museum co-founder Melvin Mac Simpson, while Burnie later married Sylvia Harrison, the daughter of a Bishop of the Church of God in Christ in Windsor. Sylvia and Burnie had two children: Todd and Troy.

Thank you to everyone who contributed information and photographs for Ransom Hurst's line. Stay tuned for next week where we will continue the Hurst family line through Ransom's brother, Washington. If you have further information or photographs connected to Washington, please contact us.