

The Green Family History Part 1 – From Elisha Young to John Green

While searching through the Museum's collection, I came across an envelope with photos and information on the family of John Green so I decided to look further into his family history. As I researched, I was able to find information on several John Greens, including two others who lived in Amherstburg, so for this month's family history I will feature branches of three (John) Green families. I'll begin with the first John Green who was previously known as Elisha Young, followed by a discussion of a second John Green who was married to Margaret Brooks and lived in Amherstburg, and end with a third John Green who was married to Lucinda Baylis and also lived in Amherstburg.

Before reaching freedom in Canada, our first John Green was known as Elisha Young. He was from Mason County, Kentucky and was married to a woman named Charlotte. Elisha and Charlotte had two children named Pollyanna and Amos. In the Museum's collection is an article written by Bernice B. Waddell titled "Elisha Young Who Became our John Green" which details Elisha's escape. It says "Men, not all of them, not even half of them, but enough of them, began to question the right of slavery. They began to weigh the advantages of slavery against the disadvantages of slavery. The slaves were discontented – not all of them – but a large majority of them. It was during these days that we meet Elisha Young in Maysville of Mason County, Kentucky."

"A strong able-bodied slave, most 30 years old, married to Charlet, even though she belonged to a different master. He was the type that sold easily in the courtyard. One day he fell from overwork, barely escaping death in a hemp field. By the time he was well, his master wanted to sell him, which was the fate of most slaves. Knowing the dreaded fear of the auction block, to be sold like cattle and separated from one's family, Elisha asked his wife's master to

buy him ... [Charlot's enslaver was] willing to pay \$900 for her husband. But alas! Elisha's price was raised to \$1000 ... Charolet's master ... refused to pay more than \$900."

"Both Elisha and Charolet were sick with grief – so sure were they that they, like so many other slave families, were to be separated. Then, too, the new master was to be feared – who would he be? What would he be like? Would he work Elisha unmercifully, and would he be cruel? The suspense of an uncertain fate is the worst kind of torture. It haunts your days and rules your nights."

Finally Charolet's master suggested to Elisha that he should run away to Ohio by means of the Underground Railway. It was a long unspoken desire flamed into light. Dreams that had kept his company during those hours of toilsome labor. Day dreams that popped out of every cotton plant – a salary, a home of his own, his family to cherish and protect and free to do what he chose to do. Just the thought of such freedom was enough to give him all the energy and courage needed to shake the iron chains of bondage."

"He was so thrilled, it was an easy task to persuade Charolet to leave her ... master and go with him in quest of this life slaves knew nothing of. She, of course, took their two children, Pollyanna and Amos About midnight, a horse was stolen from Charolet's master for her and the children to ride while Elisha with a bundle on his back kept up with the horse to the Ohio River. They were met by a Quaker, who had two skiffs ready for their departure. Hours always slip by faster when we have a lot of work to do, it seems."

"Young could oar faster than the Quaker, but they were doing all they could to get under cover quickly. For in Ripley many spies were there, ever on the watch for runaway slaves and those who helped them. Day was breaking and just when the Quaker and Elisha felt that all was lost and the Quaker called that they would either die together or live forever and never die – for

they knew that soon the spies would see them – the beauty of the early dawn was marred by a heavy fog. This thick mist covered these two lonely skiffs offering them the protection of night. Safely hidden in the fog they made their way to the country.”

“By [that] time Charolet’s master was frantic. He sent a man looking for her. Imagine, sneaking away from a life that one has always known and knowing the penalty of leaving it – the rustling of leaves, the chattering of the birds, any noise would frighten one. Naturally when a strange white man stopped, stared, and asked for a drink of water, Charolet’s very actions gave her away. By the time she got the drink he was gone, but he had a full description of her, little Amos and their humble hidden home.”

“When Elisha came home from hunting that night, there was much to tell and much to talk over and much to be done. He fixed a bell that could be rung in case the men came back and tried to steal his beloved family. When the alarm was sounded he and the other men hunting with him could rush to her rescue. Long days passed and most that poor Charolet could do was to cringe with fear – that nameless fear that haunts one. She was like a squirrel prisoned in a revolving cage, her mind kept endlessly spinning around in the prison of its own haunting remorse of what had been – and fearful misgivings of what was yet to come. She thought of her kind master, her beloved Kentucky, her babies – she was homesick for the life she knew best. ‘Tis no wonder that when the strange man came back, she went with him carrying her children without even ringing the alarm.”

“It was with heavy feet and a heavier heart that Elisha set out walking with a weapon for defense, looking for his wife and children. Back all the way to Kentucky he went, but she wouldn’t consent to leave this time, and he of course couldn’t stay there. There was only one

thing to do – go to Canada. He hid in the day time and traveled at night until he reached Windsor.”

“In a new land, doing new things, living a new life, he fought the loneliness of his heart as long as he could. He was single for two years when he met a charming midwife, Dr. Molly of mostly Indian parentage. They were married and had seven children: Gilbert, Simon, Elizabeth, Mary, Harriet, John and Susie. In the new life our slave needed a new name – that was the custom – so Elisha Young, in bondage, became John Green, the freeman. The Green’s stayed in Canada until the children were almost grown, then they moved first to Ashley, Ohio and on to Van Wert.”

“It was only natural that John Green would often think and wonder about Pollyanna and Amos Young, his first born. He would so often entertain visitors with the story of his earlier days and first family. Now that all slaves were free, it was most interesting to listen to these varied runaway tales.”

“Pollyanna had had her troubles too. She was in the hands of the Wellington old maids, they were to keep her. When she was sixteen, they sent her to their brother Gartor, to keep house for him; telling her to come to them if he insulted her. Of course he did. She walked knee deep in snow for the protection that was offered her; but when Gartor came the protection vanished. Need one describe Gartor Wellington? What could be said of any man who used a girl against her will, not to mention that the girl was just sixteen years old. Lewis, her first child, was half white. Later, she married Mr. Underwood and Elisha, Charlotta Anna, and Mary Frances were born in slavery. Pollyanna had cherished the memory of her father for her mother had told her so often of him. She, too, delighted in telling of her thrilling trip in the Underground Railway.”

“Strange, but both Pollyanna and her father met the same man and he heard both their stories. Through him they were united. Pollyanna was 40 years old, but she moved to Van Wert and spent ten years with her beloved father. Her brother Amos and her mother were both dead when she found her father.”

“In the spring of John Green’s ninety-first year, he worked in his garden. In late summer, he caught cold and was sick for two weeks with la grippe and died in September. He would have been 92 in October. His body was gently laid away but his acts of usefulness lived on, the qualities and traits that were his slipped through the blood streams of his children and on to their children, and on and on – until today when we hear of many worth while achievements of the descendants of John Green, the only fitting comment is ‘What could you expect?!’”

As mentioned in this article, John Green married a woman named Molly and they had seven children including Gilbert, Simon, Elizabeth, Mary, Harriet, John and Susie. Each child will be discussed next. Elizabeth married Jerry Williams and her sister Mary married a Mr. Highwarden, but there was no available information for Simon, Harriet, John and Susie. There was a lot of information for Gilbert’s line which will be discussed next.

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.