

The Baylis Family History Part 2 – What’s in a Name?

As mentioned, there are two main branches of the Baylis family that we are exploring this month. We discussed Henry Baylis’ family in Part 1 so it is now time to move onto Robert Baylis’ family. Robert Baylis Sr. has a connection to the Amherstburg Freedom Museum because his gravestone was recovered from a field and is now located behind the Nazrey A.M.E. Church, on the Museum’s property. Robert was born into slavery circa 1821 (some documents say 1810) in the Carolinas and he was originally known as Robert Hornsby. He escaped via the Underground Railroad, passing through Ohio while being followed by slave catchers along the way. According to Milo Johnson’s *New Canaan*, “The fugitives placed garlic and onions in their shoes to throw the hounds off their scent. Unfortunately, the slave catchers caught up to them as they were about to enter a boat onto Lake Erie. The Freedom Seekers fended off the slave catchers using the paddles of the boat and rowed off to liberty. Robert and his companion made it to freedom in Amherstburg and settled in Malden Township.” Once in Amherstburg, Robert changed his name to Robert Baylis to protect himself from slave catchers who were likely still tracking him down. Freedom Seekers changing their name was not an uncommon act. If you recall in the Johnson Family History, Gabriel Timberlake changed his name to James Johnson when he arrived in Colchester, not only to protect his family and his own identity from slave catchers; he was emancipating himself through his name by saying goodbye to his old life.

Robert Baylis Sr. lived on his farm on the 7th Concession of Malden Township. He married Elizabeth Ryer, who was the daughter of Joseph Ryer. Elizabeth’s 1909 death record lists her mother as “unknown” but it states that Elizabeth’s father was born in New York. The couple had 17 children: Mandy (1840), William (1842), Jacob (1843), George (1845), Mary (1849), Robert (1851), Sarah (1854), Lucinda (1856), Malinda (1856), Julia (1858), John (1860),

Matthew (1861), Elizabeth (1865), Mahala (1868), Joseph (1871), Booth (1871), and Martha (1872).

Of all their children, we were able to find information for Robert, Lucinda, John, Joseph and Martha. Because there is a wealth of information for Robert Baylis Jr., he will be discussed last to avoid confusion. We'll start with Robert's sister Lucinda. She married John Green and interestingly, there were two marriage records for the couple: the first is from August 2, 1873 and the second is from August 6, 1895. In both records their ages match up for Lucinda who was born circa 1856. The Marriage Record from 1895 states that John was the son of Ellik Green, but I believe this is the incorrect spelling of Alex Green. In an article from the *Amherstburg Echo* titled "A Double Funeral" it states that John was born in Malden Township in 1850 and was the son of the late Alexander Green. This article does not mention John's mother's name, but in the 1871 Census for Malden there is a John Green listed with parents Alexander and Aliza Green. I compared John's age on his marriage record and the 1871 Census and they match up, so this is likely the correct John Green and also that his mother's name was Aliza. The article "A Double Funeral" also sadly shares that John was hit by a streetcar in Detroit while driving a wagon and passed away in the Red Cross hospital from a fractured skull. It adds that John and his son Frank both worked as teamsters in Detroit. At the time of John's passing, Lucinda had already passed away on November 3, 1891.

Lucinda and John had at least ten children. The 1891 Census lists John and Lucinda with their ten children: Elizabeth (14), Gordon (13), Frankie (11), Gusla (9), Clara (7), Angeline (5), Emeline (5), Burk (3), Arabelle (2), Augusta (2/12).

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 3 where we will discuss Lucinda and John's child and other Baylis family members.