

The Bush Family History Part 5 – Escape to Freedom

The fourth branch of the Bush family to be discussed comes from William Bush and his wife Maria/Mariah Artis. According to their marriage record, William Bush, the son of Charles Bush, married Maria Artis, the daughter of Jacob and Rancy Artis, on October 19, 1899, in Colchester North. At the time, William was 63 years old, and Maria was 50. They appear on the 1901 Census and, interestingly, Mariah (Maria) is listed as the head of household and William is listed as ‘husband.’ This Census also reveals that William’s date of birth was April 15, 1833, and Mariah was born on January 1, 1849. No children are listed, but it is possible that William and Mariah were previously married and had children from another marriage considering their age. Unfortunately, I was not able to find any documents to confirm either a previous marriage or the names of any children. As mentioned, none are listed as living in the same household in the 1901 Census. A possible explanation is that, if they did have children, they were older and living on separate properties.

On April 16, 1909, *The Amherstburg Echo* reported that Maria Bush passed away on April 12th in Colchester North. Further details were shared in her obituary which said “NEW CANAAN – Mrs. Maria Bush, an old colored resident of this section, died on Monday of this week after a week’s illness. Deceased was over 85 years of age and was born in slavery in North Carolina. Her husband died several years ago.”

I found a death record and obituary for a William Bush who lived in New Canaan, Colchester North, but could not 100% confirm that this was the correct William Bush. His death record states that he died on May 21, 1904 at the age of 80 years old from being kicked by a horse. This record also shares that he was born in Virginia, a farmer, married and Baptist. In the 1901 Census, the correct William is listed as a farmer, married and Baptist which leads me to

believe that this is the correct William. Also, because William is listed in the 1901 Census and his wife's obituary from 1909 mentions William's passing, he had to have passed away between 1901-1909. The death record and obituary I found are from 1904 which adds further evidence. One issue I encountered is that William's age is inconsistent in all the documents I found for him. In his death record, William is listed as 80 years (born in 1816) which is a few years off from his year of birth that is listed in the 1901 Census (1833) and his marriage record (1836). To be clear, inconsistent ages/dates are not an uncommon finding when doing genealogical research, but because the ages do not match up, we have to be open to the possibility that this is not the correct William. I cannot be sure.

William's obituary shares more details, but not enough to confirm things. On May 27, 1904, *The Amherstburg Echo* shared William's obituary which says "Colchester North – William Bush, a New Canaan Farmer, colored, died at his home Saturday as a result of a kick from a horse. Death resulted from the iron shoe penetrating his skull, causing instant loss of consciousness. He died within a few minutes. Deceased was at work ploughing in his orchard and bent down to remove an accumulation of weeds from the ploughshare when the horse, without warning, kicked. Members of the family who witnessed the accident rushed to his assistance, only to find him dead. The deceased was 40 years old. He is survived by a widow and numerous children."

You may have noticed that his obituary says that William was 40 years old. This is an error because his death record which lists the same (rare) cause of death (being kicked by a horse) and the same date of passing (May 1904), lists him as 80 years old. One detail that puts doubt in my mind is that William's obituary says that he was survived by 'numerous children.' I

could not confirm that William was previously married or that he had any children, but it is certainly possible.

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 where we will celebrate another amazing family.