

## The Crawford Family History Part 1 – Reminiscences of Levi Coffin

This month's family history focusses on the Crawford family starting with George M. Crawford and his wife Laura Virginia Sidney. George Crawford came to Canada as a young man. According to the *Amherstburg Echo* he became a master carpenter and many of the houses he built in Amherstburg "of timbers and lumber that had to be hewn and dressed in the bush are still standing as proof of their sturdy construction. The First Baptist Church is one of them." Laura escaped enslavement in Covington, Kentucky at the age of 15 and journeyed via the Underground Railroad through Oberlin, Ohio and found freedom in Amherstburg. It was in Amherstburg that George and Laura met and married. In an article discussing George and Laura's daughter Beatrice, it mentions that her mother Laura's escape is documented in the book, "Reminiscences of Levi Coffin," but she may have used a different name or was nameless because, upon review, there is no Laura or Virginia mentioned in the book.

The *Amherstburg Echo* printed George's obituary on December 21, 1900 but, unfortunately, some of the print was cut off so I have transcribed the text that appears. It says "George M. Crawford, late of this town? Died in London on Tuesday last, December 12<sup>th</sup>?. A few weeks ago he removed to London, his state of being such as to demand it. A day prior to his death he was confined? to bed with an attack of erysipelas of the face, the cause of his death. His remains were brought here Wednesday and ? taken to the residence of J. H. Alexander. Internment took place ? (Thursday), Rev. J.A. Holt officiating, Rev. J.D. Holbert from the First Baptist church, to Rose Hill cemetery. The pallbearers were John Wesley, Jas. ?, Wm. Brantford, S. McDowell, ? Harris and John Brown."

It continues by saying "George M. Crawford was born in ? Ky., about 70 years ago and he learned the trade of carpenter ? when a young man he left ? for Detroit and after working his

trade there for a time he came to Amherstburg over fifty years ago. He twice married, his first wife being the daughter of George and Rosena ? she dying two years after the marriage, leaving no children. In 1834 he married Virginia Sidney, who survives him. He became a member of the First Baptist church and remained an ? and consistent member until his mind became impaired. His survivors are his widow and four children – Martha, Mrs. J.H. Gant, of Amherstburg; Geo. H., of Detroit; Annie, Mrs. J.H. Alexander, and Beatrice, Mrs. Philip N. Thomas, of Amherstburg.” Separate articles also mention that George was a member of the Amherstburg Literary Society and a Deacon of the Amherstburg First Baptist Church.

A few years later Laura Virginia (Sidney) Crawford passed away on February 24, 1908 in Amherstburg. Her death record states that she was born circa 1841 and her obituary shares more details. It says “Death came suddenly to Mrs. Laura Virginia Crawford early Monday morning. She had been ailing for some time but was able to be about the house until the end. She occupied the smaller of her two houses, preferring to live alone. Her daughter, Mrs. P.N. Thomas, was with her until a late hour Sunday night and wanted to remain until morning but the mother did not desire it. Returning Monday morning Mrs. Thomas found that her mother had passed away, death being due to heart failure. Mrs. Crawford was born in Covington, Ky., and came to Amherstburg nearly sixty years ago. Here she married the late Geo. M. Crawford. With the exception of one year in Windsor, Mr. and Mrs. Crawford lived here continuously. The deceased had been for nearly fifty years a devoted member of the Baptist church. She leaves one son, Geo. H. of Detroit, and three daughters, Martha, Mrs. J.H. Gant; Annie, Mrs. J.H. Alexander, and Beatrice, Mrs. P.N. Thomas, all of Amherstburg. There are fifteen grandchildren. Funeral services were held in the church, Wednesday at 2 p.m.. Rev. T.J. Henderson officiating, assisted by Rev. J.D. Holbert and Rev. D.M. Lewis. Internment followed in Rose Hill cemetery. The

pallbearers were: - Wm. Monro, Isaiah McKinney, John S. Brown, J.A. Nall, S. McDowell, Jas. Holton. The out of town persons present were Mrs. Louisa Haggins, Mrs. Ellen Shreves, of Windsor, Arthur Alexander ... Mrs. Wm. Kersey, Mrs. A. Mulder of Colchester South.”

George and Laura had several children. According to Census records their children included Margaret, George, Annie, Beatrice, and Bertha, along with Laura’s daughter Martha. Other than being listed on the 1861 Census, I could not find any other references to Margaret. She is not listed with her family in the 1871 or 1881 Census and is not mentioned in the obituaries for her siblings George or Annie so it is possible that she had passed away.

Margaret’s brother George had a bit more information in the *Amherstburg Echo* and *The Essex Free Press*. On March 10, 1911, the *Echo* mentions George’s passing writing “George Crawford, who was found dead in Detroit on Wednesday night, was a brother of Mrs. John Gant, Mrs. J.H. Alexander and Mrs. Philip Thomas, of this town. They went to Detroit yesterday to attend the funeral. George Crawford was a painter and was born and raised in Amherstburg. He was 55 years of age.” A week later, on March 17, 1911, the *Echo* reported that “The remains of George Crawford, whose sudden death in Detroit was mentioned in last week’s ECHO, were brought here Saturday afternoon over the S.W. & A. Electric railway and taken to Kemp’s undertaking establishment, from where the funeral took place to Rose Hill cemetery. A number of relatives and friends gathered to pay their last respects. In addition to his three sisters, Mrs. J.H. Alexander, Mrs. John Gant and Mrs. Philip Thomas, he leaves one son in Detroit. Deceased was a son of the late George M. Crawford, of Amherstburg. By the request of his father George M. Crawford, the younger son, will make his future home with his aunt, Mrs. P.N. Thomas.”

That same day, *The Essex Free Press* wrote “The body of Geo. Crawford, who died in Detroit on Saturday morning, was shipped to Amherstburg, his former home, in the afternoon. Mr. Crawford was 54 years of age. Death was due to heart trouble.”

**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.**