

The Crawford Family History Part 4 – The Professor

Now that I have discussed Margaret, George and Annie, I will continue with the next child of George M. Crawford and Laura Virginia Sidney, Beatrice Lillian. Beatrice was born on July 28, 1872. She married Philip N. Thomas, the son of George Thomas and Mariah Buckner, on April 4, 1894 (some records say 1896).

Beatrice was an active member of Mount Zion Baptist Church since her arrival at Oberlin, Ohio in 1912. In a write-up discussing her life, it was said that “The main interest of Mrs. Thomas in life besides her family, was church work; her devoted husband and children are thankful for her unflinching trust in God and her sublime faith in the Christian way of life.” This quote is very accurate considering she was involved with most of the church’s organizations including the Senior Choir, Missionary Society, Sunday School and BYPU, which may have stood for Baptist Young Peoples Union. She also served as a deaconess for 25 years and after her failing health no longer allowed her to be active in this work; she was made an honorary deaconess. Outside of the church she was involved in several other organizations, including the Martha Chapter of the Order of the Eastern Star, a member of the Women’s Progressive Club and a Girl Scout leader.

Beatrice’s obituary was printed in the *Amherstburg Echo* on January 28, 1954 and shared details of her life. It says “Mrs. Philip Thomas, who passed away in Oberlin, Ohio, on Sunday was the daughter of the late George and Virginia Crawford and was born in Amherstburg, July 28, 1872. In 1894 she married Philip Thomas who survives her. They have resided in Oberlin for the past 41 years. There were eight children, seven of whom survive namely, Mrs. Gladys Wallace, Mrs. Thelma Godette of Oberlin, Mrs. Mary Ward and Mrs. Linny Leach of Loraine, Ohio; Mrs. Annie Hargraves of Covington, Kentucky; Philip Thomas, a prominent Loraine

attorney and chairman of the civil service commission and Wilbur Thomas of Warren, Ohio. There are 12 grandchildren and nine great grandchildren. Two sisters, Mrs. Martha Gant and Mrs. J.H. Alexander and a brother George Crawford predeceased her. Funeral service was Tuesday afternoon at Mt. Zion Baptist Church, Oberlin of which Mrs. Thomas was a deaconess for 25 years. She was a past matron of Martha Chapter O.E.S. and with her children she was active in many useful organizations until her health failed.” Sadly, her husband Philip N. Thomas passed away a few years later on July 6, 1963 in Lorain, Ohio.

Beatrice and Philip had eight children: Shelena, Gladys, Thelma, Mary, Linny, Annie, Philip, and Wilbur. Shelena Lillian Thomas was born on March 14, 1899 in Amherstburg. Her sister Gladys married into the Wallace family, while Thelma married a labourer, Rollin Clyde Godette, the son of Henry Godette and Etta Fields, in February 1928 in Lorain, Ohio. Mary Maria Frances Thomas was born on December 13, 1901 in Amherstburg. She married Clinton Ward. Interestingly, Mary Ward was a celebrated resident of Lorain, Ohio, and was described as “one of the ‘richest women of the locality in friendship and respect.’” She gave her time and talent to both civic and humanitarian causes, and on March 2, 1971 the community honoured and thanked her with a civic testimonial dinner that had 250 people in attendance. Sadly, Mary passed away the next day at the age of 68. She had two children: Clinton Jr. and Marion (m. John Marshall).

Mary’s sister Linny May Freida Thomas was born on November 4, 1903 in Amherstburg. She married into the Leach family. Linny’s sister Annie was born on December 14, 1905 in Amherstburg. She married a teacher, William Frederick Hardgraves, the son of Hammond Arthur Hardgraves and Anna Dere Langford, in June 1930. Annie’s brother Philip M. married a

woman named Betty, while Wilbur C. Thomas married a woman named Marie. Philip and Beatrice also had a daughter named Beatrice Virginia, but she sadly died in infancy.

Now that I have discussed Margaret, George, Annie, and Beatrice, I will discuss the biological child of Laura Virginia Sidney Buckner and the stepdaughter of George M. Crawford, who was named Martha Joiner. She married John Gant, the son of Edward and Roxanna Gant, on May 26, 1868. John Gant was also referred to as 'Professor' John Gant and he worked in many jobs including his work as a barber, Sanitary Officer and Dog Tax Collector, and County Constable. Because I was able to find a lot of information for John Gant and some of his family members, the Gant family will be featured in next month's family history series.

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.