

The Matthews Family History Part 1 – The Matthews Settlement

In last month's Turner family history, I mentioned that Georgina/Jordina Turner married Solomon Matthews. I'm going to continue the Matthews' family history this month beginning with Edmund Matthews. The Amherstburg Freedom Museum family history binders include a copy of Edmund's will which states that he died on January 10, 1857. Milo Johnson's book *New Canaan: Freedom Land* adds further detail and says that Edmund married a woman named Sarah. They, along with their son Matthew, arrived in Colchester in roughly 1833, coming from West Virginia. In 1838, Edmund acquired 50 acres of land on Lot 5 of the 3rd Concession, purchasing the land for £72. By the time of his death in 1857, Edmund had a total of 100 acres of land. Milo Johnson adds that the Matthews family became successful farmers and businessmen, purchasing land and raising livestock which included horses, sheep, cattle, hogs, and poultry.

Based on available records, Edmund and Sarah had at least four children including Edward, Matthew, Ellen, and Luke. No information was found for Edward and the only reference to Luke is found in the Museum's family history binders which includes a note that says "whereabouts unknown at time of father's death." There was a wealth of information for Edmund and Sarah's other children Matthew and Ellen. I'll begin with Matthew.

According to the *Historical Atlas of Essex and Kent Counties*, Matthew Matthews was a farmer who resided on Lot 5 of Concession 3 in Colchester South and owned 345 acres which was valued at \$12,000. Matthew inherited 100 acres from his father Edmund, but Milo Johnson adds that it was through sound business transactions that Matthew acquired the remaining acreage on the 3rd, 4th, and 6th Concession of Colchester South. The *Historical Atlas* adds that Matthew Matthews was also a School Trustee and was born in 1822 in Virginia. Matthew was a respected citizen who in 1889, was included in a 'Silver Cane' contest to award the most

outstanding Black citizen of Colchester South. He is also responsible for establishing the Matthews Settlement, which was located approximately five miles northwest of Harrow, Colchester South Township. It stretched from the 2nd, 3rd and 4th Concessions at the Drummond Road intersections and the area north and south of Concession #2 from Drummond Side Road to Smith Side Road. It was approximately five square miles of space. Matthews also played an instrumental role in building the settlement's first church and school.

Matthew Matthews married Alma Day, the daughter of Edmund and Diannah Day in 1844. The only information that I could find for Alma was her death record which states that she died on February 4, 1903, in Colchester South at the age of 76. This document also mentions that she was born circa 1827 in Ohio.

Matthew Matthews' death record and obituary were also available. His death record states that he passed away on November 11, 1906 in Colchester at the age of 84. His occupation is listed as 'Gentleman' and there is also a note on his death record that says, 'born in slavery.' Matthew's obituary from the *Amherstburg Echo* shares further details and says "One of the oldest and best known colored residents in this township passed over the river peacefully, Sunday morning, full of years and good works, in the person of Matthew Matthews, sr. The deceased had set his compatriots a shining example in thrift and frugality all his life, and he became very highly respected. Coming to this township when a lad with his father, the late Edmund Matthews, from Virginia, they settled between the 2nd and 3rd concessions, on what is now known as the Matthews Settlement. Elisha Matthews occupied the original homestead. At the age of 22 the deceased was married to Alma Day, and fifteen children were born to them, seven yet living. They are Solomon, Matthew J., Elisha, Martha, (Mrs. S.P. Leek), Ellen (Mrs. Grayer), all of Colchester South; Alzora, of Detroit; and Alma, Mrs. (Rev.) W.H. Bazie, United

States. Mr. Matthews early joined the Baptist church and was licensed as a Baptist preacher. The funeral took place Tuesday, services being conducted by Rev. Bradby, of the First Baptist church, Windsor, and interment was in Central Grove cemetery. The pallbearers were W.H. Morgan, Anthony Banks, A. Bird, W. Hurst, A. Morgan and J. Hall.”

Matthew and Alma had at least 14 children including Edmond, Solomon, John, Luke, Matthew J., Mary, Ann, Elisha, Angeline, Martha, Ellen, Alzora, Alma, and Celista. Edmond married Mary Mason. Tragically, Edmond was shot by a man named Oliver Richardson who had been feuding with Matthews for several years. Edmond’s death record states that he passed away on July 11, 1903 in Colchester South at the age of 55. This record also states that he was born circa 1848 and was a farmer. In a writeup, Edmond was described as a peaceable and law-abiding citizen. According to an *Amherstburg Echo* article, Edmond was also a hero. The article, which was printed on January 4, 1901, recalls the events of a fire that occurred at James Grier’s house on the 3rd concession which “was burned to the ground. Mr. and Mrs. Grier had gone to a New Year’s tree at Central Grove leaving their two children at home in bed. It is supposed the stove pipe caught fire and when discovered the flames had got beyond control. Ed. Matthews saw the fire and got there in time to get the children out, but everything else was consumed including \$150 in cash the proceeds of the sale of his hogs. There was some insurance but Mr. Grier’s loss will be heavy.”

Edmond and Mary’s children included Mary E., Sarah L., Joseph, Martin, Jenny and James. Mary E. married George Tailor, the son of Jos. Tailor and Dolly E. Green, on April 16, 1894 in Detroit. Mary’s brother Joseph was born on October 20, 1884, while his brother Martin married a woman named Edna. The 1930 Michigan Census lists Martin along with his wife Edna and children Luther and Beulah Taylor (step-daughter). Martin’s death record states that he

passed on May 29, 1937 in Detroit at the age of 47. This record also mentions that he was born on June 20, 1889 in Harrow.

Martin's sister Jenny was born on February 20, 1889 in Colchester. She later married Eldred Powell, the son of Lewis Powell and Grizeal (also spelt Grazelia, Grozillia, and Grozia) Hann, on February 1, 1905 in Colchester South. Lewis Eldred Powell was born on July 10, 1884 in Colchester. Jenny Matthews Powell passed away in 1911 and her obituary from March 24, 1911 in the *Amherstburg Echo* shares that "Mrs. Eldred Powell did not long survive her return home from Detroit, where she was receiving treatment for tuberculosis, passing away Saturday. The funeral took place Monday forenoon, services being conducted in the B.M.E. church by Rev. Peter Brooks, and interment was at Gilgal, the pallbearers being Jesse Currans, Albert Lewis, A. Coates, A. Brookes, Charles Marshall and Ezra Banks. Mrs. Powell's maiden name was Jennie Matthews, daughter of the late Edwin Matthews. She was married six years ago, and besides her husband and four little children, leaves her mother, 3rd concession and two brothers, Joseph and Martin. Her's is the third death from consumption in the Matthews family."

Following Jenny's death, Eldred must have required assistance with taking care of their children because an *Amherstburg Echo* article from May 5, 1911 says "Mrs. Lewis Powell and Miss Cecile Powell, who have been on a six month visit with her daughter, Mrs. Alex Nicholson, of St. Catharines, returned this week to care for her son Eldred's children." An additional *Amherstburg Echo* article from November 24, 1911 offers a possible explanation. The article mentions that he worked as a chef of the M.C.R. and was spending a Sunday with his family. His career as a chef may have taken Eldred away from home, requiring help with taking care of his children following Jenny's passing. A separate article from June 7, 1912 adds that he was employed as a chief cook on the M.C.R. dinning cars and "was taken very sick with abscess of

the brain at Bay City, last week, and had to be removed to the Mercy hospital, where he was treated for ten days, and is now about all right again. He was in a very critical condition for some time.”

Eldred and Jenny’s children include Effie Georgetta, Lawrence, Edmund, and Jennie Vernie Louise. Effie was born on January 31, 1907 in Colchester. She married Atkins Porter, the son of Henry Porter and Mattie Atkins, on March 7, 1928 in Lucas, Ohio. I was able to find records for their children Wilbur Eugene, Lawrence, Edmund Louis (Eldred), and Jennie. Wilbur Eugene Porter married Katheryine Russell, the daughter of Thomas A. Russell and Mildred L. Hudson, on August 12, 1956 in Los Angeles, California. Wilbur’s brother Lawrence was born on August 8, 1905 in Harrow, while Lawrence’s brother Edmund, also known as Ted, was born on November 5, 1908 in Colchester.

The name Ted Powell may sound familiar to anyone who knows the history of Emancipation Day Celebrations in Windsor. Following the passing of Mr. Emancipation, Walter Perry, on August 17, 1967, Edmund ‘Ted’ Powell became the Director of Emancipation Celebrations from 1968 to 1984.

I was also able to locate his obituary in the *Windsor Star* which appeared on January 9, 1996 and says “POWELL, Edmund Louis (Ted) Born Colchester South Township (Harrow, Ont.), died at Hotel Dieu Grace Hospital Hotel Dieu Site on January 7, 1996, at the age of 87 after a courageous battle with cancer. Late of Windsor. Loving companion and best friend of Doris (Fryer). Dear dad and best friend to Lynn. Dear grandpa and best friend to Michelle. Predeceased by son Mike (1966) and step-daughter Sandy Merritt (1963). Predeceased by parents: mother Jenny (Matthews) Powell, father Louis Eldred Powell, sister Jenny Venor Powell, and Brother Lawrence Eldwood Powell. Dear brother of Effie Davis, Detroit and

Barbara (Wilson) Fraser. Survived by niece Barbara, nephews Buster, John, Lawrence and Louie, Detroit, Mich. Step-father to Barbara (Merritt) Gyles of Tilbury ... Ted was retired from the City of Windsor after 25 ½ years. He was Past President of C.U.P.E. Local 82 Outside Workers, 1964-1972. He was Director of Emancipation Day Celebrations from 1968-1984. He was 'Uncle Ted' to many nieces and nephews. Ted will be greatly missed by many relatives, friends, neighbours and the in-laws. He was an active member of the British Methodist Episcopal Church."

Edmund's sister Jennie Vernie Louis Powell was born on June 30, 1910 in Colchester South. According to her death record, she passed away on July 27, 1918. According to the *Amherstburg Echo* "Jennie, 8-year-old daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Eldred Powell, passed away at their home, 3rd concession, Thursday of last week. She had been a sufferer for a long time with tuberculosis. The funeral took place on Saturday to the B.M.E. church, Harrow, where services were conducted by Rev. Peter Brooks, and interment was in Gilgal cemetery."

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.