

The Powell Family History Part 2 – Doc Powell

Now that I have discussed Mahalia and Mary, I will share information about Nathan and Martha Jane (Seymour) Powell's next child, Nathan. He was born in Colchester South on July 2, 1861. He married Annie Marie Hullum, the daughter of Jasper Hullum and Marie Stewart. According to the *Amherstburg Echo*, "At the residence of Rev. L. Pierce, Amherstburg, on Sunday, April 21st, by Rev. J.A. Holt, Mr. Nathan S. Powell to Annie, daughter of Mr. Jasper Hulm, both of Colchester South. I was able to find an obituary for Annie Marie's father Jasper Hullum in the *Amherstburg Echo* which was printed on January 1, 1904. It says "One of the best known colored men in this county was killed in the Pare Marquette train wreck near Grand Rapids, last Friday night. We refer to Jasper Hullum. Mr. Hullum was best known as a canvasser for church enterprises, and as such had travelled not only in every part of this but adjoining counties. He was born in North Carolina in 1844, and came to this township when a boy. He was raised by an old gentleman named Anthony, and after reaching manhood married Mary Stewart. They had seven children, four sons and three daughters who reside as follows: Alzora, Mrs. James Banks, Windsor; Mrs. Nathan S. Powell, Colchester South; Mrs. M. Galloway, Detroit; William, Darius and Herman, Detroit and Gordon, Colchester South. The deceased and his wife moved to Windsor several years ago and there he identified himself with the work of the A.M.E. church. At the time of his death he was soliciting funds for the Victoria Red Cross Hospital, to be erected in Windsor. The remains were brought here Wednesday morning over the L.E. & D.R.R. and taken to Central Grove for interment. Rev. Mr. Davis, of Windsor, officiated. Quite a large crowd of former friends turned out and followed the remains to their last resting place. The pallbearers were Anthony Banks, Henry Harris, R.M. Dennis, John Brown, Marion Banks, and Elijah Pines."

Nathan Powell appears to have been involved in several occupations. According to the *Amherstburg Echo* “The police forces in the county were made up of county constables ... A number was designated for each district ... A few were Colchester South, Anthony Banks, William Hughson, Charles Staddon, Nathan Powell and Roland Wright.” Milo Johnson adds that Nathan S. Powell was also known as the Town Crier in Harrow and would use his powerful voice to announce sporting events and debates. He was also involved in the actual debates as was reported in the *Amherstburg Echo* on February 26, 1897 which said “On Tuesday evening the 26th there was a debate in Central Grove under the management of the lyceum. The subject was ‘Resolved that the orator wields more influence than the writer.’ The affirmative was championed by ? D. Dennis and James Turner. The negative was upheld by Nathan S. Powell and Albert Mulder. The affirmative defeated the negative 21 in 15 points.”

On February 15, 1901, the *Echo* also shared a letter to the editor from Nathan Powell which was about Queen Victoria. It said “To the Editor of THE ECHO – I cannot at this time withhold the asking of a small space in your valuable paper to express our heartfelt sorrow on the removal, by the hand of Providence, from our midst of our Noble Sovereign Queen Victoria. The world has sustained a great loss in her death; but of all the races of earth, the race to which I belong, namely the colored race, owes to her memory the greatest tribute of respect. Sir you will remember that Great Britain in the reign of William the fourth, uncle of Her sainted Majesty, abolished slavery, and it had for its results the liberation of 800,000 slaves. The ransom paid by the Government was twenty million sterling. Immediately after King William’s death, which was about four years later, Queen Victoria ascended the British Throne. At that time our neighboring Republic to the south, amongst others, was holding colored slaves and she took a step further and proclaimed to the colored bondsmen throughout the world, if they could but only set their foot on

British soil they should be free and we all know the result. Though we were ignorant, poor and despised she protected and educated us by her moral influence into the Royal path of life and into the eternal hope of happiness in the life beyond. There are thousands of other things she has done for us but space would not permit the telling. But I desire it to go down in history that the black men in this Great Colony are as sensitive of the loss we have sustained as any other race which helps to make up the British Empire, and be it remembered that we will always love and revere the memory of her sainted Majesty Queen Victoria. *The pains of death are past, Labours and sorrow cease, And life's long warfare closed at last, Her souls is found in peace. Soldier of Christ, well done, Praise by thy new employ, And, while eternal ages run, Rest in thy Saviour's joy.* -NATHAN POWELL. Colchester South, Feb. 8th, 1901.”

On May 27, 1904, Nathan Powell's loyalty to the Crown was expressed at a Victoria Day Celebration. The details of the event were reported in the *Amherstburg Echo* which said “On Tuesday evening Victoria day was right loyally celebrated in Central Grove A.M.E. church, when the stewards held a box social which was well attended. After singing Martin Luther's favorite hymn ‘Praise God from whom all blessings flow,’ by the congregation Rev. D.M. Lewis led in prayer. In his introductory speech he paid a touching tribute to Her Sainted Majesty, Queen Victoria. Hilliard Hughbanks was called to the stand and rendered a beautiful solo ‘The Easter Sunday morning.’ Nathan S. Powell was next called to the stand and delivered an address telling of the protection the late Queen and the British law gave the colored men in this country, in the dark days of slavery in United States; of the peace and quiet which this country enjoys at present; He said that Britain with the sword in one hand and the bible in the other had civilized and christianized more men and women than any other nation in the world. He closed with an earnest appeal to his people to take advantage of the times and while other churches were making

efforts to unite it is our duty to consider the same question. A standing vote of thanks was rendered the last speaker and the boxes were put on sale. A. Mulder wielded the hammer and received high prices for them. Proceeds amounted to \$11.35.”

The Census also lists him as a garden farmer and Milo Johnson adds that Nathan S. Powell “was an excellent gardener and was the first farmer in the Colchester area to begin growing fruit. He had impressive hotbeds and raised both fruits and vegetables which he peddled on the streets of the local communities. I was also able to find some interesting articles in the *Amherstburg Echo* which talk about his work in manufacturing and selling medical remedies. On May 8, 1891, the *Amherstburg Echo* printed “Nathan S. Powell begs leave to inform the public that he has bought the right and receipts for Sloan’s Indian Tonic; Burtch & Co.’s Eastern Liniment, or English Opadildoc, and a German Salve, which are warranted cures for the various complaints for which they are prescribed. He always keeps a full supply of the above patent medicines, fresh and good. With thanks to his many patrons for their patronage, he still desires to extend his trade. All orders promptly responded to. Address, Nathan S. Powell, Harrow P.O., Colchester South, Canada.”

A few years later, Nathan was still in this trade as was reported in *The Windsor Evening Record* on November 12, 1897, which said “Patent medicine peddlers, Nathan H. Haley and Nathan S. Powell are canvassing their respective medicines, and report trade fair. A grand improvement on trade this fall from that of last fall.” On February 27, 1920, the *Amherstburg Echo* printed an advertisement for Powell’s remedies and more, writing “FOR SALE – Tobacco seed of the White Burley variety saved from selected plants, \$1.00 per oz. Sent any place in Canada postage paid on receipt of price. Also Powell’s Sloan’s Indian Tonic, Vegetable Cough Syrup and Powell’s Genuine Liniment, which are among the best proprietary medicines on the

earth. NATHAN S. POWELL, ... R.R. No. 1, Harrow, Ont.” His work in medical remedies earned him the name ‘Doc Powell.’”

Nathan S. Powell passed away on May 20, 1928 in Colchester at the age of 66 years. The *Amherstburg Echo* printed his obituary a few days later, on May 25, 1928 which says “Our old friend, Nathan S. Powell, one of the best known colored men in South Essex, passed away at the family home, Snake Lane, Sunday evening following an illness of six months. It was noted from time to time lately in The Echo that his condition was serious and his physicians felt that there was no hope of his recovery. Mr. Powell was born on lot 5, 5th concession, near what is known as the ‘Flat Iron,’ July 2nd, 1861, son of Nathan and Martha Powell. His parents are long since dead but he leaves one sister, Mrs. William Kersey, of Harrow; a brother died in infancy. His father was quite a stump speaker, and Nathan S. no doubt inherited his ability as an orator from him and in his prime of life was often heard to good effect on political platforms speaking in the interests of the late Hon. W.D. Balfour, the late John A. Auld and H.W. Allan. He dabbled somewhat in pharmacy and registered some root remedies known as Powell’s General Liniment, Vegetable Cough Syrup and Indian Tonic, which he sold throughout the county, and this earned for himself the sobriquet of ‘Dr.’, by which he was best known. He was married on April 24th, 1895, to Miss Annie Maria Hullum, who survives him, but there was no family. He served as trustee of the Public school and was trustee and steward of the B.M.E. church for many years; was always known as a man of his word and was very highly respected throughout the community. Funeral services were held in the B.M.E. church Wednesday afternoon, with burial in Gilgal cemetery, Rev. Harris and Rev. Perry officiating.”

Interestingly, even after Nathan S. Powell died, his wife Annie Marie still kept selling their medical remedies for several decades. On August 8, 1941, the *Amherstburg Echo* printed

“Good For Man and Beast” which says “There was an interesting visitor in the Harrow Echo office on Wednesday morning when Mrs. A.M. Powell came in to order some labels for Powell’s Eastern Liniment that has been sold by her late husband and herself for years. Although past 71 years of age Mrs. Powell is bright and alert and her eyes light up as she tells the story of tramping the country from door to door peddling her famous liniment for ten years following the death of her husband in 1928. ‘Many times,’ she said, ‘I have walked down from Harrow to Arner and gone into the store there and ordered some crackers and cheese for my lunch. I’m too old to get out on the road now,’ she continued, ‘but I always keep a stock at home for those who want it.’ Older residents of this district will remember ‘Doc’ Powell who went up and down the concession in the county with his liniment ‘good for man and beast.’ Mrs. Powell told us that the formula for the remedy was purchased by her husband from a man named Burch who came from the east. ‘I’ll canvass the east and you take the west, he told my husband,’ she said. The fine colored lady stated her liniment is registered and she wants to keep the formula and sell medicine as long as she is able.”

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.