

The Powell Family History Part 3 – Building a New Life in Freedom

Now that I have discussed Willis Powell's branch, I will move on to discuss Lewis Powell and his descendants. He was the son of Dred and Libbie Powell. Lewis Powell married twice. His first marriage was to Hettie/Hattie Tate (some records say Hurst) and then to Grazelia (sometimes spelt Drusilla) Hann. The 1871 Census lists Lewis and Hettie, along with their children Ann, Robert, Margaret, Henry, Mary, Gordon and Francis. Not listed are Lewis and Hettie's other children including William, Lewis Jane, and Rosena. *Find a Grave* states that Hattie M. Powell was born in 1849 and died on May 10, 1876 at the age of 27. I could not find further documentation to confirm this, but Hettie does not appear on the 1881 Census. This would explain things. The 1881 Census lists Lewis with his second wife Grozilia, along with Robert, William, Mary, Gordon, Francis, Jane, Rosena, Minnie and George. Several of the children are from Lewis' first marriage. Lewis and Grozilia's children include Minnie, George, Esther, Eldred, Wilson, Mabel, Kydson, Sybil, and Nona. Before discussing their children, I'm going to share more about Lewis and Grozilia. Lewis passed away on March 26, 1907 in Colchester. His death records says that he was born circa 1838 and that he was a farmer. His obituary which appeared in the *Amherstburg Echo* on March 29, 1907 says "Another landmark has been removed from among the colored residents of this township, in the death of Lewis Powell, on Tuesday. The deceased had been ailing for several months, but it was only three weeks ago he took down seriously. The funeral took place yesterday (Thursday) at noon, services being conducted in the B.M.E. church, of which deceased was a member, and interment was in Gilgal cemetery. Mr. Powell was born in slavery, and came to this township as a lad. His first wife was a Miss Tate and they had a family of fifteen, three of whom are living, Robert, of Colchester South; Gordon, of Toledo, Ohio, and Frank, of Ypsilanti. His second wife was Drusilla Hanns, who survives him. Their family were eight, six of whom are living, Minnie, Mrs.

Pettyford, Esther, Mrs. Carter, Eldred, of Colchester South and Mabel and Kydson, at home. Mr. Powell was one of the best known colored men in the township.”

Several years later, Grozilia passed away on January 11, 1916 in Colchester. Her death record says that she was the daughter of Samuel Hann and Esther Hayes. Her obituary from the *Amherstburg Echo* appeared on January 14, 1916 and shared that “Mrs. Grozella Powell, relict of the late Lewis Powell, died at her home here on Tuesday following a lingering illness with dropsy, in the 65th year of her age. Deceased was daughter of the late Samuel Hanns and his wife Esther. The latter is still living in her 87th year, and has the added distinction of being a native of Colchester South. Mrs. Powell was born in the township and for some years followed the profession of school teacher. She was married at the age of 26 to Mr. Powell and they had a family of eight children. He died 9 years ago. Besides the aged mother mentioned above, there survive the following family: Minnie (Mrs. Nelson Pettiford); of Buffalo; Esther (Mrs. Harry Carter), of Colchester South; Eldred, of Detroit; Mabel (Mrs. Alex Nicholson), of St. Catharines; Kydson, of Buffalo, and fifteen grandchildren. Deceased was a life long member of the B.M.E. church. She suffered her last illness with resignation and without complaint. The funeral took place yesterday (Thursday) afternoon to Gilgal cemetery.”

As mentioned, Lewis was first married to Hettie/Hattie. Their children include Sibbie Ann, Robert Eli, Margaret, Henry, Mary, Gordon, Frank, William, Lewis, Jane and Rosena. I was able to find information for Sibbie Ann, Robert Eli, Gordon, Frank, William, Lewis, Rosena and possibly Margaret. I found a death record for a Harriet Margaret Powell for May 29, 1879, but I could not find anything else to confirm this, but Margaret is listed on the 1871 Census, but not the 1881 Census, meaning the timeline matches up.

Sibbie Ann's gravestone says that she was born on November 22, 1858 and that she died on March 22, 1875 in Harrow. She was 16 years old. Sibbie Ann's brother, Robert Eli married Mary Annie Baylis, the daughter of Henry and Mary Jane Baylis, on July 10, 1884 in Amherstburg. Robert Eli's death record states that he died on February 18, 1944 in Ypsilanti, Michigan and that he was born in Harrow on September 17, 1861. Robert Eli's brother Gordon passed away on January 21, 1920 in Toledo. According to his death record, he was married to a woman named Nellie and he worked as a labourer.

The next child of Lewis and Hettie Powell is Frank. He married Hattie Johnson, the daughter of George Johnson and Frances Pines, on January 27, 1898 in Colchester. Frank and Hattie are listed on the 101 Census for Colchester South, but they moved to Ypsilanti which was reported in the *Amherstburg Echo* on November 8, 1907 after Hattie visited from Ypsilanti. According to Frank's death record, he passed away on May 30, 1935 in Ypsilanti, Michigan. Frank's brother William passed away on March 17, 1896 at the age of 28 years old. His obituary from the *Amherstburg Echo* which was printed on March 20, 1896 says "William Powell, son of Lewis Powell of the ? c[oncession?] died on Tuesday night of consumption. He was 28 years of age and lived for some years in Detroit?, Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti, but returned home last fall. The funeral took place yesterday (Thursday) morning from his father's residence to Gilgal cemetery. Rev. W.H. Snowden officiating. Mabel Powell, a sister of deceased is very ill with the same ? and Wilson Powell, a brother, was buried about three weeks ago."

William's brother Lewis married Ellen Poole, the daughter of Marion Poole, on August 3, 1894 in Washtenaw, Michigan. Lewis married a second time to Mary Stone Simmons, the daughter of John Simmons, on June 6, 1903 in Lenawee, Michigan. Lewis' third marriage was to Eleanora Bannister, the daughter of Synix Bannister and Ellen Jones, on November 2, 1903 in

Adrian, Michigan. Lewis' sister Rosena passed away on March 20, 1883 in Colchester at the age of 10.

As mentioned, Lewis Powell Sr. married a second time to Grozilia Hann. They married on April 12, 1877 in Colchester. Their children include Minnie, Esther, Eldred, Wilson, Mabel, Kydson, Sybil, and Nona. Minnie married Charles Nelson Pettiford, the son of Charles and Sarah Pettiford, on December 6, 1889. A death record for Charles' sister Matilda Clingman shares that their mother's full name was Sarah Halburt. Minnie and Charles had at least two children named Cecilia/Cecil who was born on May 12, 1897 and Charles Louie who was born on September 10, 1909. The only reference for Charles Louie is found on the 1940 Census where he is listed as living with his aunt and uncle Esther (Powell) and Harry Carter. Cecilia Estella Pettiford married Archie Bell, the son of George Bell and Nellie Fletcher, on March 15, 1916 in St. Catharines. They had a son named Ralph and I was able to find an article about Ralph which appeared in the *St. Cloud Times* on April 25, 1999 and was titled "Evangelist Bell brings spiritual message to local ears." The article says "Ralph Bell learned early on that sometimes you need more than one chance, and a little guidance, to get on the right path. Dropped off by his mother at school for his first day of kindergarten, young Bell quickly decided school wasn't for him. He walked out of the classroom and kept right on going, walking each step of the two miles back to his home. Unfazed by Bell's quick return home, his mother simply gathered him up and drove him back to school. This time he decided to stay. Bell's preaching during Celebration '99 in St. Cloud may remind attendees of that young boy. It will reach out to those searching for answers, those searching for the right path. It will be filled with quiet determination and strength. 'We want to share the good news of the Gospel, to move upon those who do not know the Lord,' Bell said from his home in

Bellevue, Colo. ‘We want to prick the ears of the community and get people to reflect on their spiritual relationship.’”

The article continues by saying “Bell has been preaching the Gospel since 1960, since 1965 as a member of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. Graham handpicked Bell to join his ministry when the two met during the Watts riots. Bell was a young pastor at his first church in Los Angeles at the time. Almost 35 years later, Bell continues to preach the good news of Jesus Christ around the world. ‘My greatest reward is seeing people come to know the Lord as their savior, whether in this country or abroad,’ Bell said. The Ralph Bell Evangelistic Ministry has a simple but profound mission: to help people find God and enjoy his presence forever. Bell said the No. 1 problem facing people today is the lack of knowing God. Once that problem is solved, the others will take care of themselves. ‘Man's greatest need is to know him, love him,’ Bell said. ‘When we get to know our creator, we're able to love our neighbor as ourselves. ... You have to have the power to love other people and also the desire. Just accept people as people and be colorblind. ‘Sin, not skin, is the problem.’ The process of Celebration '99, like all BGEA crusades, is threefold: First, to preach the Gospel in hope that people will be reconciled to God and to each other in Jesus Christ. Second, to help Christians of all denominations come together to display a united witness for Christ. Third, to strengthen church congregations through evangelism training, with an emphasis on Bible study and personal and corporate prayer.”

“It will be out of character if Bell gives any fire and brimstone sermons at the crusade. His messages likely will be quiet in manner, but loud in significance. Bell, 64, was born in Canada, appropriately enough on a Sunday in 1934. He was the last of Archibald and Cecilia Bell’s eight children. He attended a small African Methodist church as a youth and was a pretty good baseball and football player. When he was 16, he received Jesus Christ as his personal

savior. Bell became active in his church youth group and at 17, he and the group attended one of Graham's crusades. 'I'd never dreamed that God would have this in store for me,' Bell said. 'I just saw God using this man and wanted to be a person God would use, too.' Many people are searching for the answers to life. Bell figures he has a good answer for them and will be happy to pass it along for free at the crusade. 'A person should attend, especially if he is experiencing an emptiness,' Bell said. 'He may have a searching heart, wondering what purpose is there of his existing. It might be an individual who just feels empty in his life, that there's something missing.' 'It is possible a crusade like this can help him. ... 'A lot of people feel themselves in times of crises,' Bell continued. 'It could be a financial loss, the loss of a loved one. Some are just searching, but can't put their finger on it. It's a hunger God put in the human heart. It comes to different people in different ways. I think we all have it at some time or another.'"

"Bell has done extensive prison ministry. But he'll leave those duties to others in the Billy Graham team in St. Cloud. 'That way we free me up to be on target for the evening service,' Bell said. In at least one way, prison ministry isn't a tough sell. 'You don't have to prove very much that man is a sinner,' Bell said. 'You just get on with the solution, not the problem. There are so many young people in prison, and it's nice to see them turn it around. You also see older guys help younger ones. They themselves have helped the Lord.' While some of Bell's messages are fairly standard, many are not. Bell consults with local ministers and the BGEA team before each night's meeting, then prays, studies and prepares his lessons. Bell will deliver those messages each night to highlight Celebration '99. He will speak about families Thursday. He will address youth Saturday. 'The subject matter the other nights will be more general,' Bell said. 'We could talk about man's needs, the problem of guilt and forgiveness, that aspect of God's love. Or why do good people suffer in an evil world?' Bell also hopes to speak on diversity and racial

harmony, a problem the St. Cloud area, alongwith many others, is wrestling with. Fear is often the culprit. 'One of the big difficulties with individuals is the problem of fear,' Bell said. ' ... When you get to know each other, you really see they're not much difficult than yourself. People are pretty much the same. If we can break down the barriers of fear, and establish trust, you're a long way to making racial harmony work.'"

"Bell hopes Celebration '99 will attract an audience, churched or unchurched, of different races and creeds that will join together to hear God's words. The starting point to break down the barriers lies in the young, Bell said. 'If we can do it with the children, we stand a far better chance,' Bell said. 'They're the ones who can make inroads with their parents.' Another lesson Bell hopes will resonate with Central Minnesotans is how the Christian denominations are more alike than they are different. 'Focusing on our differences is not the way we need to proceed,' Bell said. 'I think we need to realign our focus on God. We don't have time for arguing and fighting with ourselves when there's work to be done.' A key factor in the BGEA accepting the invitation to come to St. Cloud was the ecumenical spirit Bell felt exists among area churches. 'Everywhere we go, we spend some time in prayer, and we want to see what kind of cooperation they have there,' Bell said. The BGEA accepts 60 percent to 70 percent of community invitations. 'If the lines of division (between area churches) are too great, if we don't think there is cooperation, then we don't go,' he said. While he acknowledges that sometimes some denominations and local churches are more supportive of the crusades than others, Bell wanted to extend an invitation for all church members and ministers to attend the crusade. 'We leave it up to them whether they feel they can cooperate,' Bell said. 'Whatever they decided, that's OK. We just go on with the work we do.'"

Now that I have discussed Minnie, I will move on to discuss her brother George. He passed away on July 4, 1881 at the age of 9 months. George's sister Esther married Harry Carter, the son of John Carter and Sarah Wilson, on April 26, 1903 in Windsor. They had at least four children including Edward, Gretta, Fraser, and John. Edward married Laura V. Gantt, the daughter of Samuel Hopkins and Ada Doxy Hopkins, on March 19, 1946 in Erie, Pennsylvania. Edward's sister Gretta was born on January 10, 1907 in Colchester, while Fraser was born on November 10, 1909 in Colchester. Their brother John was born on September 20, 1911 in Colchester.

The next child of Lewis Powell and Grozilia Hann is Eldred who was born on July 10, 1884 in Colchester. He married at least two times. His first marriage was to Jennie Matthews and his second was to a woman named Winnifred. Jennie Matthews was born on February 20, 1889 and was the daughter of Edmond Matthews and Mary Mason. Jennie and Eldred married on February 1, 1905 in Colchester. Jennie and Eldred's children include Effie Georgetta, Lawrence, Edmund Louis (Ted), Jennie, and Barbara. Effie Georgetta 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. Effie may have also married a second time because an article that discusses her father, Louis E. Powell, also mentions Effie as Mrs. John Davis of Detroit. I found evidence for at least one of Effie and Atkins's children who was named Wilbur Eugene Porter. His marriage record says that he married Lou Katheryine Russell, the daughter of Thomas A. Russell and Mildred L. Hudson, on August 12, 1956 in Los Angeles, California.

Effie's brother Lawrence was born on August 8, 1905 in Harrow, while Jennie was born on June 30, 1910 in Colchester South. Sadly, she passed away a few years later on July 27, 1918. Her passing was shared in the *Amherstburg Echo* on August 2, 1918 which says "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.”

Jennie’s brother Edmund Louis (Ted) Powell may be the most well-known member of the Powell family because of his connection to the Emancipation 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. Emancipation Celebrations meant a lot to Ted as he was quoted as saying “I can personally remember as a small boy at the age of 4 or 5 years, when my aunt and father would drive to Amherstburg by horse and buggy from the Third concession in Colchester South with lunches packed to spend this first day of August celebration, our freedom.”

Edmund Louis (Ted) Powell was born on November 5, 1908 in Colchester. 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 of 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."

Following Ted's passing the *Windsor Star* printed a tribute to him titled "Saluting a life of struggle" which says "When I've gone that last mile of the way, I will rest at the close of day." Edmund Louis (Ted) Powell is resting now. His last mile, a courageous struggle with cancer, the one foe he couldn't subdue, ended with a 'homegoing service' Thursday in the British Methodist Episcopal Church on University Avenue. There have been bigger send-offs in Windsor. And far more elaborate ones. But even a king's funeral, with all its pomp and pageantry, couldn't match this simple ceremony for warmth and hopefulness. It was honest. Straightforward. And direct. Just like the pugnacious Harrow-born union leader and Emancipation Day promoter whose 87 years of struggle to overcome barriers, visible and otherwise, we were commemorating. They labelled it a celebration of the straight-talking, take-no-guff Powell's long and eventful life. And God was it ever. I've been to a lot of funerals over the years. Loathed each and every one of those grim occasions and the sorrowful memories they left behind. This was different. Sure. There were tears shed. Buckets of them. But this time the message of hope and optimism and seize-the-day urgency was so powerful and so insistent that I left the church feeling, and I'm sure I wasn't alone, something close to joy at being alive. There was a poignant moment near the end of the service when one of Powell's lifelong buddies, a fragile J.J. (Jack) Evans, stepped forward and saluted his friend as the undertakers rolled the casket down the aisle. As schoolboys, these two had shared a very special day. They played hookey and sold racing forms during the historic Oct.

12, 1920 showdown at Windsor's Kenilworth Park racetrack between Man O' War and Sir Barton, one of the great sporting events of the century.”

The article continues, “In a feature story to mark the event's 75th anniversary, I described Powell and Evans as “old men watching the last grains of sand slipping down life's hourglass.” Little did I know how few grains were left. Powell, who had a special way with words, summed up the race this way: “Big Red (Man O' War) went by that English horse (Sir Barton) like a freight train going by a tram. Talk about a racehorse and a jackass running against each other. That's how it looked.” But Powell had a lot more to say about Windsor in the 1920s, about growing up in an era of vicious racism in which the N-word was a daily fact of life and some city streets and neighborhoods were virtually off-limits to black youngsters.” This article also mentions that Ted Powell enlisted in the Canadian Army and was sent to the Sarnia area for training. It also mentions how he was refused service in a bar because of the colour of his skin. Also included is the racism that he experienced in Essex County, stating “Powell, as a small child, lived within a stone's throw of a school in Harrow but was forced to walk miles to a county school, even in the dead of winter. Why? Because the nearby classrooms were off-limits to black kids. Powell remembered how the friendly white folks would smile and wave while driving past him and his little siblings as they trudged home from the county school. And to his dying days he wondered why not one of those nice smiling people ever stopped to give them a ride. ‘Y'all didn't go through what we went through,’ Powell confided. So true.”

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 4.