

The Powell Family History Part 4 – The Redcap

Now that I've shared information for Jennie and Eldred's children, I'll share a few more details about them. Sadly, just a few years after Jennie and Eldred were married the *Amherstburg Echo* printed Jennie's obituary on March 24, 1911 which says "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. Hers is the third death from consumption in the Matthews family."

Eldred Powell appeared several times in the *Amherstburg Echo* because of his work on the railway. According to an article from June 7, 1912, Eldred was employed as chief cook on the M.C.R. dining cars. Several years later, on October 16, 1931, another article titled "The Boy Who Made Good" featured the work of C.E. Powell which I believe is actually L.E. Powell (Lewis Eldred). The article says "Among Harrow's native sons, who have made good in the business world, is one who comes in contact with everyone who has occasion to take the C.N.R. at Windsor. We refer to C.E. Powell, the efficient, genial and obliging railway porter at that station. Mr. Powell is a son of the late Louis Powell and has held his present position for six years. Harrow has reason to point with pride to splendid way in which Mr. Powell is handling his job."

When Louis Eldred Powell passed away in 1957, *The Windsor Daily Star* printed his obituary which says “POWELL, Louis E., 75 years, Nov. 30, 1957, at Hotel Dieu Hospital. Husband of Winnifred, 341 Howard Ave. Dear father of Louis E. (Ted), Windsor; Mrs. Effie Davis, Detroit, and Barbara at home. Dear brother of Mrs. Alex (Mabel) Nicholson, St. Catharines; Kydson F. Powell, Buffalo, N.Y.; eight grandchildren. Resting at James H. Sutton Funeral Home, 937 Ouellette Ave, till Tuesday, 11 a.m., thence to B.M.E. Church, McDougall St. until 2 p.m., time of service. Rev. I.H. Edwards officiating. Interment Windsor Grove Cemetery. Masonic service under auspices of North Star Lodge No. 7 A.F. and A.M., Monday evening at 8:30 at funeral home.”

Following his passing, *The Windsor Daily Star* printed a detailed tribute to Eldred who was well known as a C.N.R. Redcap. The article says, “Louie Takes Hist Last, Longest Trip – in Death – Famous C.N.R. Redcap, L.E. Powell Collapses on Job at City Station – Windsor lost a nation-wide trademark Saturday with the death of Louis E. Powell, known to thousands of Canadian and American travellers as ‘Louie the Redcap.’ Mr. Powell, who for the past 30 years was news agent, porter and general handyman at the Canadian National Railways station, suffered a heart attack while waiting for the 2:20 p.m. train to arrive at the station. He was 74. Mr. Powell was probably the best known ‘redcap’ in Canada, but because he was the sort of person who never talked about himself, few people knew his real name. During his service with the C.N.R., ‘Louie’ met dozens of important visitors. He carried the baggage of prime ministers, Members of Parliament, outstanding business heads and thousands of servicemen. He waited on King George VI and Queen Elizabeth, watched the coming and going of eight city mayors and noticed the passing of prominent citizens whom he numbered among his ‘regular customers.’

After coming to Windsor even with this everyday reminder to travel, Mr. Powell never travelled further than the Walkerville station, a mile from the Windsor depot, on a train. He made his trip to provide last minute travellers with the latest edition papers.”

The article continues with “Before working in the city he was a helper in the dining cars on the Michigan Central Railway trains between Chicago, Buffalo and Detroit. One of Mr. Powell’s biggest thrills came in June 1939, when he delivered a telegraph message to King George and Queen Elizabeth in their private car. A valet in the coach took the telegram before Mr. Powell got a chance to see the King and Queen, but he had the satisfaction of being closer to the outstanding visitors than thousands of others who packed their railway siding to greet them. Mr. Powell will be best remembered for his perpetual smile, kind word of advice and happy philosophy. He worked tirelessly as a porter, gardener, janitor and a walking information booth for puzzled travellers. Greatness never impressed Louie but he found most people in high position were very gracious. But all his ‘customers’ from the army privates to high ranking diplomats received the same considerate treatment from the little porter. Born in Colchester South Twp., Mr. Powell came to Windsor in 1917. He was a member of the B.M.E. Church and of North Star Lodge No. 7. A.F. and A.M. He is survived by his widow, Winnifred, of 841 Howard Ave., a son, Louis E. of Windsor; two daughters, Mrs. John Davis (Effie,) of Detroit and Barbara at home; a brother, Kydson F. of Buffalo, N.Y.; a sister, Mrs. Alex Nicholson (Mabel), of St. Catharines, and eight grandchildren. Funeral service will be conducted at 2p.m. Tuesday at the B.M.E. Church with Rev. I.H. Edwards officiating. Masonic services will be held at Sutton Funeral Home ... The body will be at the funeral home until 11 a.m. Tuesday when he will be taken to B.M.E. Church. Burial will be in Windsor Grove Cemetery.”

A separate article from the same edition of *The Windsor Daily Star* (December 2, 1957) titled "So Many Will Miss Louie" with more glowing words. It writes, "The Canadian National depot won't seem the same without Louis E. Powell. He was there to speed passengers on their way and to welcome them on return. So many knew Louie and he knew them. He could call people by name and it was always a pleasure to have him take the bags and see they were put in the right place. Only last Monday evening Louie welcomed us back to Windsor, taking the bags in the snowstorm and his warm smile made us forget the chill and damp. Louie always had such a merry laugh. People had learned to look for him and exchange greetings and the time of day. Louie wished so many of us in Windsor well as we departed on some journey. As Louie goes on his last trip, our prayers go with him. He had become an institution in Windsor."

Now that I have shared everything I could find about Eldred, I will now discuss his remaining siblings Wilson, Mabel, Kydson, Sybil and Nona. The only information I could find for Wilson is his death record and an obituary. He passed away on March 6, 1896 at the age of 10. His obituary from the *Amherstburg Echo* says "Wilson, son of Lewis Powell, who has been ill with an abscess in his back, died on Tuesday in his 10th year, and was buried in the cemetery at Gilgal yesterday (Thursday), Elder W. Crosby officiating. Mabel, sister, and William, brother, of the deceased, are both very low with small hopes of recovery."

Wilson's sister Mabel is the next child of Lewis and Grozilia Powell. She married Alexander Nickolson, the son of Adam Nickolson and Mary Amos, on April 15, 1908 in St. Catharines. Their children include Mallagy, Ronald and Earl. Mallagy Alexander Kydston (Kydson) Nicholson was born on March 6, 1909 in St. Catharines. He married Louise Johnson, the daughter of Lonnie Johnson and Lulu Lattermore, on January 13, 1932. Mallagy's brother

Reginald Ronald was born on April 2, 1911 in St. Catharines. His brother Earl was born on August 19, 1912 in St. Catharines and passed away on May 26, 1918 at the age of 5.

I was also able to find an interesting article reprinted in the *Amherstburg Echo* on April 18, 1919 which says “The following is a clipping from the Globe: ‘Faith, Hope and Charity Baptized. Unique event on St. Kitts Collection for Special Perambulator. St. Catharines, April 6th – The British Methodist Episcopal church had an unusual event this afternoon in a baptism service for triplets – two boys and one girl – children of A.C. Nicholson, of Vine street. Faith, Hope and Charity are the names of the trio. All are experiencing teeth cutting. The service had been announced, the church was filled and a special collection was taken to provide a special perambulator.’ It will be remembered that Mrs. Nicholson (nee Mabel Powell) was a daughter of the late Lewis Powell, of this township.”

The only other reference I could find to these children was a death record for Walter Lawrence Nicholson who was the son of Charity Nicholson and Edward Smith who passed on December 21, 1937. The informant was Faith Nicholson.

Mabel’s brother Kydson is the next child of Lewis and Grozilia Powell. There are several references to Kydson’s education and occupations in the *Amherstburg Echo*. On February 4, 1910, the newspaper reported that Kydson was attending automobile school in Buffalo. On November 24, 1911, the *Amherstburg Echo* printed that he left Detroit to start his work as a barber in Buffalo. In February 1913, he changed course and attended college in Wilberforce, Ohio and by 1915 was back in Buffalo. Kydson and his wife appear on the 1930 Census for Buffalo, New York, along with their children Kydson F., Marion, Howard and Margaret. Kydson’s nephew Louis Pettiford was also living with them. The 1940 Census for Buffalo lists Kydson and his wife Edna and their children Kydson, Marian, Howard and Margaret, along with

their daughter-in-law Friday Queen. Kydson Jr. is listed as married on this census so he is likely the person married to Friday Queen. This Census lists Kydson as a Train Porter, while Edna worked as a Maid. Kydson Jr. was a mechanic, Marian was a Maid and Howard worked as a Clerk. Kydson Jr. and his wife Esther, who I believe is Friday Queen, are listed on another 1940 Census. This time Kydson's occupation says "Car Wash" at a public garage. According to Kydson's headstone, he was born in 1890 and passed away in 1964, while Edna's headstone says 1898-1976.

A newspaper called the *McClatchy Tribune Business News* printed an article about Kydson and Edna's son Howard on March 28, 2011 titled "A crucial role without firing a bullet." This article discusses Howard's military service and writes "Howard G. Powell was drafted into the Army in 1942, but instead of being assigned a rifle, he was put to work taking notes and typing. That's because he had a skill the Army valued. At Fosdick-Masten Park High School, he had taken shorthand, and the military needed soldiers who could rapidly take accurate notes at disciplinary proceedings. 'I covered court-martial proceedings in the Pacific Theater for soldiers who were brought up on charges of dereliction of duty,' Powell says. 'I covered the hearings in shorthand and did a lot of transcribing.'

"Unlike other African-American soldiers who were placed in all-black units, he served in a mostly white battalion. Race was not a factor, he said. 'I was proud to be doing my job and proud to be serving my country,' Powell recalls. When he wasn't working at disciplinary hearings, he drove a truck, delivering supplies on Pacific islands from Hawaii to the Philippines. And while Powell had a front-row seat to history in World War II, he says, he is also proud of being part of a historic group of African-Americans who hold claim to being members of the first generation of native Buffalonians of black ancestry. Born in 1921, he and many other African-

Americans made up that local generation, and they shared a special bond in being able to call this Northern city their hometown. His father, Kydson F. Powell Sr., came to Buffalo from Canada. He had lived near Windsor, Ont. As the family story goes, Buffalo's economic opportunities back in the early 20th century beckoned Kydson Powell. He found work as a porter, or redcap, with the New York Central Railroad.”

“While working the rails, he met his future wife, Edna, from Scranton, Pa., and they married. She was a homemaker, music instructor and organist at St. Luke AME Zion Church. Howard Powell, the third-youngest of their four children, followed in his father's footsteps, working as a redcap at the old Central Terminal until Uncle Sam interrupted his career with a draft notice. That is when Powell got the chance to put his shorthand skills to work with the military. He knew he was in a sensitive position, with the careers of soldiers on the line at courts-martial. Instead of combat, he explains, he witnessed another side of the war--soldiers in precarious positions for allegedly violating orders. Upon returning home from the war, he resumed working as a redcap but soon began employment at the Westinghouse plant in Cheektowaga and became one of the company's first black supervisors. For 41 years, he worked at Westinghouse. Mainly on his income, he and his wife of 64 years, Ethel, now deceased, raised four children, Veronica, Natalie, Myron and Derrick. In retirement, he did some work as a private investigator. But his life was not all work. He served as an organizer of a party that had been held every other year in the Buffalo Convention Center and had been open to African-Americans who were part of that first generation of blacks born in the city. That fit right into his passion for history. The party was dubbed ‘The Buffalonians,’ and as word spread, the gathering grew from about 100 people to more than a thousand, with folks returning home to Buffalo from all over the country and the world. But as age crept up on the organizers such as Powell, it

was no longer feasible to put on the extravaganza. Yet even as he approaches the ripe old age of 90, Powell still gets around and is an active member at Our Savior Lutheran Church on Brunswick Boulevard, where he served as treasurer for more than 25 years. ‘I have been blessed. I was able to live and to love and to see so much,’ he says. ‘I’ve always believed in God, family and racial pride.’”

The last two children of Lewis and Grozilia Powell are Sybil and Nona. The only reference I could find for Sybil was in the *Amherstburg Echo* which mentions “Misses Sybil and Cecelia Powell are visiting their uncle Gordon Powell, and Mr. and Mrs. Roberts of Toledo, Ohio.”

Nona is the last member of the Powell family to be discussed. She married James Hahn. According to her death record, she passed away on September 15, 1931 in Windsor at the age of 55. She is also listed as a widow, so James had passed away by that point. Nona’s obituary appeared in the *Border Cities’ Star* on September 16, 1931. The obituary says “– Mrs. Hahn Dies After Long Illness – Mrs. Nona Hahn, 55 years old, died yesterday at her home, 731 Howard avenue, following a lengthy illness. Mrs. Hahn had been sick for 15 years. Born at Harrow, she lived there until she came to the Border Cities 12 years ago at Harrow. Her husband, James, died 27 years ago. Mrs. Hahn was a member of the B.M.E. Church in Windsor. She is survived by one daughter, Mrs. Beryl Vidal, of Detroit; two brothers, Louis Powell, of Windsor, and Kyston Powell of Buffalo; and two sisters, Mrs. Esther Carter, of Buffalo; and Mrs. Mabel Nicholson, of St. Catharines. Funeral services will be held Thursday at 2 o’clock from the B.M.E. Church. Burial will take place at the Windsor Grove Cemetery. Rev. F.L. Stewart will officiate.”

Nona’s obituary mentions her daughter Beryl Hahn. She married James Vidal, the son of Albitina Beechum and Joseph Vidal, on November 24, 1920 in Detroit. According to his WWI

Draft Registration, James Augustus Vidal was born on February 5, 1893 in Trinidad, West Indies. I also found a Declaration of Intention for Beryl Hahn Vidal which records her occupation as 'Presser', that she was born on December 5, 1898 in Harrow, and that she had a son named Robert who was born on April 2, 1921 in Windsor and was also serving in the US Army.

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.