

The Stephens Family History Part 2 – Councillor with Honour

Now that I have discussed William and his line, I will move on to discuss the next child of Major Stevens and Mary Harris, Ezekiel. He married Catherine Brown, the daughter of Nelson Brown and Ellen Lewis. Their children include Annie, Lincoln and Malachi. As mentioned, Ezekiel is the inspiration for writing this family history because he was mentioned in an editorial written by John Gant who wrote that Ezekiel Stephens was a councillor. Although it appears that Ezekiel was active in the community, I could not find many references to his work in *The Amherstburg Echo*.

I was able to find a death record and obituary for both Ezekiel and Catherine. Ezekiel passed away on June 5, 1919 in Amherstburg. His death record states that he was born on August 10, 1841 in Amherstburg, worked as a farmer and labourer, and passed at the age of 68. His obituary was printed in *The Amherstburg Echo* on June 11, 1909 and reported “Ezekiel Stevens, whose illness was noted in these columns last week, passed to the Great Beyond, Saturday last, at the residence, Murray and Seymore streets. Monday afternoon funeral services were held at the First Baptist church by the pastor, Rev. T. Jesse Henderson, assisted by Rev. Joseph Hulbert. The pastor’s impressive exposition of Divine truth taken from Job 14:14, ‘If a man die, shall he live again,’ was listened to by an audience which completely filled the sacred edifice, and the service was enriched by the rendition of a solo, ‘Face to face,’ by Mrs. James Kirtley. Large numbers of friends joined the mourning relatives paying respect to one who in life had been a well-known figure in this town. The remains were taken to Rose Hill cemetery and laid away, under Masonic auspices, deceased having been a member of Lincoln Lodge, No. 8, F. & A.M. The pallbearers were Albert Chambers and Evans, of North American Lodge No. 1, Windsor; Wm. Johnson, of North Star Lodge, No. 7, Colchester North; L. Jones, D. Holbert and John S.

Brown, of Lincoln Lodge No. 8, Amherstburg. Mr. Stevens was born in Amherstburg, and was a son of the late Major Stevens. Of the family Sarah is Mrs. James Underwood; LeAnna died in Detroit; Mary is deceased, and Martha is Mrs. Harris of Chicago. The subject of this sketch was married to Catherine Brown, daughter of the late Nelson Brown, and they had a family of three – Lincoln, who died in 1905; Malachi, of Buffalo, and Annie, Mrs. John Foster. Besides these there are four grandchildren, children of John Foster. Mr. Stevens was a citizen of Amherstburg all his life and took an active part in affairs calculated to advance the town's best interests. He was elected Public school trustee several terms, was councillor in 1888-89 and '92 and fraternally was associated with Lincoln Lodge No. 8 F.&A.M., serving as treasurer several terms. His life was an object lesson to his fellowman in kindness, generosity and willingness to assist those about him. His advancement at the hands of the electors showed that neither creed nor color is considered above ability to serve in a public capacity. Among his own race he was a leader and his death removed one upon whom they placed great reliance.”

Just a few years later, on February 7, 1911, Ezekiel's wife Catherine Brown Stevens passed away in Amherstburg at the age of 64. Her death record reveals that she was born on May 5, 1847 and was the daughter of Nelson Brown and Ellen Lewis. Catherine's obituary appeared in *The Amherstburg Echo* a few days later on February 10th and says “Mrs. Catherine Stephens passed away Tuesday afternoon at her home on Seymore street. She had been poorly for some time and was subject to weak spells. While carrying in an armful of wood one day recently, she was seized with one and falling injured herself and this hastened the end. Mrs. Stephens' maiden name was Catherine Brown, a daughter of the late Nelson Brown, who at one time lived in the house adjoining the Desjardins place, Seymore Street. Her marriage to Ezekiel Stephens resulted to a family of three Malachai, of Buffalo, Lincoln, who is dead, and Mrs. John Foster, King

Street. Mr. Stephens died two years ago and since that time the widow kept her grandson Theodore Foster with her for company. The funeral will be held this (Friday) afternoon to the First Baptist Church for service with interment in Rose Hill Cemetery.”

As mentioned, Ezekiel and Catherine’s children include Annie, Lincoln, and Malachi. Annie Elizabeth Stevens was born, according to her death record, on April 30, 1866 in Amherstburg. She married John Arthur Foster (a marine chef) on January 17, 1882 in Detroit. John was the son of Levi Foster and Lucy Harris (see Foster family history <https://amherstburgfreedom.org/foster-family/>). John and Annie had several children including Theodore, Annie, John, Ella, Elenore, and Bessie. Theodore S. Foster was born on June 17, 1883 in Amherstburg and became a marine chef. According to his obituary from the March 11, 1927 issue of *The Amherstburg Echo* “Theodore (Couch) Foster, son of the late John Foster, died at the family home, corner Murray and King streets on Saturday about noon. He had been in failing health for some time from tuberculosis. Funeral services were conducted at the home Monday afternoon at 2 o’clock and burial was in Rose Hill cemetery. Mr. Foster was born in Amherstburg June 17th, 1883. He attended the Public schools and early took to the lakes, becoming a very well-known marine chef in charge of some very important boats. Of late years, owing to uncertain health, he was able only to take positions on boats running out of Amherstburg. His parents have been dead for some years, but he is survived by sisters -Ella, Mrs. A.M. Bell, of Windsor; Annie, Mrs. Joseph Paulson, of Winnipeg; Bessie, Mrs. W. Maier, and brother John of Amherstburg.”

Theodore’s sister Annie was born on September 16, 1887 and later married Joseph Paulson and they lived in Winnipeg. Annie’s brother John, according to his marriage record, married Marjorie Katherine Laura Alexander, the daughter of John Henry Alexander and Annie

Louise Crawford, on February 7, 1921 in Walkerville (now part of Windsor). Marjorie Katherine Laura Alexander was born on August 10, 1896. John and Marjorie's marriage record also states that John worked as a decorator and Marjorie was a stenographer. They had at least two children, John (married Sarnia Jones) and Patricia. According to the site *Find A Grave* Marjorie passed away on January 23, 1984 in Sarnia, but I was not able to find her obituary. I did find the obituary for Marjorie's husband in *The Windsor Star* on March 21, 1958 which says "Ex-Lake Ship Sailor, J.A. Foster Dies – A lifelong resident of Amherstburg district John Arthur Foster, 66 of 209 Alma St., died Thursday in Essex County Sanitorium following a long illness. He was a former wheelsman on great lakes ship and also a decorator and painter in Amherstburg and Windsor. Surviving are his widow, Marjorie (nee Alexander); a son John A. with the Canadian Army at Sarnia; a daughter Patricia Anne, Sarnia; two sisters, Mrs. Ella F. Bell, Mrs. William Zimmer (Bessie), both of Detroit and two grandchildren. The body will be at the James H. Sutton Funeral Home, Sandwich and Gore Sts., Amherstburg, Saturday. Further arrangements are incomplete."

John's sister Ella married Alfred Bell, the son of Jemima Shirk and Montgomery Bell. Alfred and Ella had two sons named Robert and Floyd. Ella's obituary appeared in *The Windsor Star* on September 19, 1962 and says "Mrs. Alfred Bell – Mrs. Ella Bell, 66, of 1062 Goyeau St., died today in Hotel Dieu after a short illness. Mrs. Bell was born in Amherstburg and had lived in Windsor for many years, formerly living in Detroit. She was a member of First Baptist Church. Her husband, who was a sailor, died in 1933. Surviving are a son, Robert, of Windsor and a sister, Mrs. Bessie Zimmer of Detroit. Funeral service will be at 2 p.m. Friday at the James H. Sutton Funeral Home, 937 Ouellette Ave. Rev. Mack Brown officiating. Burial will be in Rose Hill Cemetery, Amherstburg."

Ella's husband Alfred Montgomery Bell passed away a few decades before on December 28, 1933 in Windsor. His obituary appeared in *The Windsor Star* on January 5, 1934 and says "ALFRED M. BELL – Following a two month illness the death occurred of Alfred M. Bell, of Windsor, at his home at 812 Mercer Avenue, Windsor, on Thursday morning, December 28th. Deceased was the brother-in-law of John Foster, George Street, Amherstburg. His wife formerly Ella Foster, daughter of the late Mr. and Mrs. John Foster, lived here until her marriage to the deceased in 1905. One child, Robert, survives him. Deceased was 62 years of age and was for many years a cook with the Pittsburgh Steamship Co. He was born in Detroit. The funeral was held on Sunday afternoon from his late residence to Rose Hill cemetery, Amherstburg."

Ella's sister, Elenore Foster, was born on September 20, 1885 in Amherstburg, while Bessie Eileen Foster was born on September 30, 1897. Bessie married Willard Maier, who passed away in 1933, and had at least three children named Zeke, Dwight and Betty. Bessie married a second time to William Zimmer and they lived in Detroit. It should also be added that in the 1920s, Bessie was appointed an "industrial nurse in the town for the Metropolitan Life Insurance Co." Bessie passed away on March 26, 1971 in Detroit and her death record says she was born September 30, 1987.

Returning to Annie Stevens and John Foster, I was able to find each of their obituaries. John passed away on April 29, 1911 and his obituary from *The Amherstburg Echo* which appeared on May 5, 1911, states "Foster – At the Marine hospital, Detroit, Mich., Saturday, April 29th, John Arthur Foster, son of the late Levi Foster, of Amherstburg, aged 48 years. Deceased was born in Amherstburg, being a son of the late Levi and Lucy Foster. He was one of a family of nine, three of whom survive – Mrs. Louise F. Jacobs, Levi and Thomas Foster all living in the States. He was married to Miss Annie Stephens, daughter of the late Ezekiel Stephens and to

them were born six children, five of whom are living – Theodore and Bessie, at home; Ella, Mrs. A.M. Bell, of Windsor; Annie, Mrs. H. Bludsoe?, of Winnipeg, Man., and John, of Chicago. Mr. Foster was a steward on the great lakes which occupation he followed until a year ago last December when he came home after laying up his boat, the steamer City of Paris, and was taken to his bed. After a time he was taken to the Marine Hospital in Detroit, and remained there until the end came, which was within one day of 13 months. The remains were brought to Amherstburg by special car, Saturday evening and the funeral took place, Monday afternoon to the First Baptist church, where services were conducted by Rev. A.W. Hackley, assisted by Rev. J. Hulbert, and interment was in Rose Hill cemetery, the pall bearers being – Walter Anderson, David Hulbert, W.H. Bush, James Monroe, John R. Brown and Henry Banks. Quite a number of relatives and friends from Detroit and Windsor attended the funeral.”

Annie Stevens Foster passed away over a decade later, on July 21, 1923 in Amherstburg. Her obituary from *The Amherstburg Echo* which appeared on July 27, 1923 shares that “The very sudden death of Mrs. John Foster, one of the town’s best known colored women, Saturday night, at the door of her daughter’s residence on Seymore street, was a great shock to the town, of which she was a native, and highly respected, hardworking and thrifty citizen. The manner of her death was totally unexpected. She had spent a short time with her daughter, Mrs. Mayer, who lives across the street from her, and was just going out the door to return to her own home when she collapsed on Mrs. Mayer’s steps and expired before her horror-stricken family could remove her. Heart failure was the cause of death. Mrs. Foster’s maiden name was Annie Stevens. She was a daughter and the last of the family of the late Ezekiel Stevens, a prominent and highly influential citizen of Amherstburg in his day. She had two brothers, Lincoln and Malachi, both of whom predeceased her. She was married about forty years ago to John Foster a lake cook. He

died ten years ago, leaving her with a family of five – Ella, Mrs. A.M. Bell, of Windsor; Theodore, who lives at home; Annie, married in Winnipeg; John and Bessie, Mrs. Mayer, of Amherstburg. Mrs. Foster was the soul of honor and the acme of industry. Following her husband's death she engaged to do the work of many families in Amherstburg, and by her thrift and economy improved her home so that it is one of the neatest, most comfortable and attractive in that part of the town. She acquired considerable means and other property. Of late years, she gave up a good deal of her work, but retained the janitorship of the Bell Telephone office and the Imperial Bank. She performed these duties as usual Saturday and returning home, looked well to her own house as befitted a good housewife, not complaining either of being unduly weary or of any illness. The sudden cutting off of her life has caused widespread sorrow.”

Annie's brother Lincoln is the next child of Ezekiel Stevens and Catherine Brown. He is listed in the 1891 Census under the same household as his parents Ezekiel and Catherine. Next to his name it says “M” meaning he was married, but his wife is not listed. The same occurs in his obituary which states that he was married, but again does not list his wife's name. His obituary from October 13, 1905 in *The Amherstburg Echo* says “The death occurred at the marine hospital, Detroit, Sunday evening, of Lincoln, son of Ezekiel Stevens of this town while sailing on the Str. Phillip Minch, he was taken seriously ill with typhoid fever, but was not removed until Saturday when passing Detroit. His condition by that time was such that physicians could do nothing for him. He was born in this town 37 years ago, and after reaching young manhood took to the lakes as many other young men from this town do. He was married some years ago. Besides his parents he leaves a sister Mrs. John Foster, of this town and a brother Malachi, Buffalo. The body was brought home on Monday evening and the funeral was held Wednesday afternoon, services being conducted at the First Baptist church by Rev. D.S. Slaughter assisted

by Rev. D.M. Lewis. The remains were interred in Rose Hill cemetery. A large cortege followed them to their last resting place.”

Lincoln’s brother Malachi also worked on a steamship. On December 29, 1893, *The Amherstburg Echo* mentions “Malachi Stevens, of the steamship H.D. Coitinberry?, arrived home on Thursday of last week.” Malachi passed away on March 7, 1915 in Cleveland, Ohio. His date of birth is recorded as February 15, 1874 and he is also listed as single. His obituary which appeared in *The Amherstburg Echo* on March 12, 1915 shares more details. It says “The body of Malachi Stephens, youngest son of the late Ezekiel Stephens, was brought to Amherstburg Monday from Cleveland, where he died Sunday in the Marine hospital. He was a marine cook, but through failing health gave up his position on a lake boat last year to receive treatment. Four weeks ago he entered the Marine hospital, where he sank rapidly. The funeral took place Wednesday afternoon, services being conducted at the residence of Mrs. John Foster and interment followed in Rose Hill cemetery. Mr. Stephens was born in Amherstburg 41 years ago, and spent most of his life on the lakes. Mrs. Foster is the only one of the Stephens family left.”

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.