

The McDowell Family History Part 4 – Central Citizens' Association

The last child of John McDowell and Mary Harris that I will discuss is Samuel McDowell. He married Mary E. Smith, the daughter of Captain James A. Smith and Mary Ann Underwood, on May 10, 1882 in Amherstburg. Mary and Samuel had several children including James, Samuel Lyons, Roman Lafayette, Mary Gertrude, Benjamin Arthur, Frederick Robert, Ethel/Edith Eloise, Sherman, Lawrence and May. James was born on December 9, 1882 in Windsor, but sadly passed away the same day. Samuel Lyons was born on May 14, 1884 in Windsor, while his brother Roman Lafayette was born on January 4, 1886, also in Windsor. Roman married Anna/Rosanna Ward, daughter of James Dennis and Esther Crump, on June 19, 1924 in Detroit. She was born on August 18, 1880, in Colchester South. Her marriage record to Roman lists her as Anna Ward, but her maiden name is Dennis. This is because she was previously married to Virgil M. Ward, son of Virgil M. Ward and Mary E. Snowden. The couple married on October 25, 1905, in Detroit.

Roman's wife Rosanna is mentioned in *The Border Cities' Star* on March 1, 1932, because of a concert presented by the Baptist Church in Amherstburg. The program included "an interesting paper on 'Woman's Place in the Federation of Churches' which was presented by Mrs. Roman McDowell. *The Windsor Star* also reported on July 13, 1929 that Rosanna was elected as Chairman of the Program Committee and Assistant secretary for the Colored Citizens' Association (later the Central Citizens' Association) of Windsor. The CCA was established in 1828 and among their goals, the CCA lobbied governments for legislative change and employment opportunities, lobbied employers for job opportunities for Black Canadians, worked with other organizations inside and outside of the African Canadian community, and fought discrimination in all aspects of life. This was in addition to pushing for integration and fair treatment at establishments such as hotels, restaurants, in housing and community institutions.

Rosanna was re-elected in 1930 which was also when Robert L. Dunn was President of the organization. Robert L. Dunn was a very impressive figure, becoming a City Councillor for Windsor, being re-elected seven times, in 1893, 1894, 1895, 1897, 1898, 1902 and 1903. He was also the first Black Canadian to run for Mayor of Windsor in 1897.

The same year that Rosanna was re-elected secretary, 1930, she is mentioned in *The Windsor Star* in the article "Ask Lights" where she calls for proper street lighting. The article says "Asking that lighting be provided on the newly extended part of Tuscarora street, from Windsor to Ouellette avenue, the Colored Citizens' Association of Windsor has written Mayor Jackson and the council. The association's secretary, Mrs. Rosanna McDowell, points out that an increasing amount of traffic is found on the new portion of Tuscarora, and since it is a central thoroughfare, proper lighting is needed."

As the secretary of the CCA, Rosanna also wrote a letter requesting that a person of colour be hired as the caretaker at a Windsor school. In *The Border Cities' Star* article titled "Colored People Ask School Job -Would Have One of Race Made Janitor" from January 14, 1931, it says "Suggestions of the Colored Citizens' Association of Windsor and vicinity that a colored man be appointed as caretaker for one of the Windsor public schools will be considered by G. Stanley Adams, superintendent of maintenance for the schools, according to a recommendation passed by that management committee of the Windsor Board of Education last night. A letter received from Mrs. Rosanna McDowell, secretary of the association, of which R.L. Dunn is president, asked that consideration of a colored caretaker be given at the next appointment. The letter stated that the association had recommended George Coats, Charles Garrell, Rev. T.E. Woodcock and James Jacobs as being suitable for the position." Roseanna was the secretary for the CCA from 1929 until at least 1933, possibly longer. She was also a member

of the Lydian Musical Association and is mentioned in *The Detroit Tribune* on August 9, 1941 when the Lydians held tea and music in the Detroit Federation of Women's Clubs. The article lists Rosanna McDowell as the President of this organization.

Rosanna's husband Roman served in WWI based on an article from *The Border Cities' Star* which, on December 20, 1918, printed "Wreath of Flowers from Flanders Field - In the front room window of the home of Mrs. Mary McDowell, 131 Windsor avenue, hangs a Christmas wreath made of holly from France, in which are woven many flowers from the battlefields of Flanders. The wreath was sent to Mrs. McDowell by her son, Pte. R. McDowell, now overseas, and who, previous to his enlisting, was well known in Windsor." I believe that Pte. R. McDowell is Mary's son Roman and this is confirmed in his obituary. His obituary appeared in *The Windsor Star* on October 31, 1950 and says "Roman L. McDowell, 64, died yesterday at Receiving Hospital, Detroit, after a short illness. Mr. McDowell was born in Windsor and lived here all his life prior to moving to Detroit 15 years ago. He was a member of the First Baptist Church, Windsor, and a veteran of World War I. Survivors are his wife, Mrs. Rose McDowell; two brothers, Arthur and Sherman McDowell, of Windsor; and one sister, Mrs. Eloise Taylor, of Windsor. Funeral service will be held at 11 a.m. on Thursday at the First Baptist Church, Windsor, with Rev. M. Brown officiating. Burial will be in Windsor Grove Cemetery. The body will be at the Bristol Funeral Home, Detroit, until the funeral service in Windsor." In Roman's obituary it mentions that his wife was named Rose. This is a shortform for Rosanna, also mentioned previously as Anna Ward. I can confirm that Rose and Anna are the same person because of Roman's naturalization record which lists Rosanna as his wife, whom he married on June 19, 1924. This is the same date that he married Anna, confirming that they are the same person.

Roman's sister Mary Gertrude McDowell was born on September 2, 1887 in Windsor. Her death record states that she passed on December 13, 1907 in Windsor at the age of 20. She is also listed as single. *The Amherstburg Echo* wrote on December 20, 1907 "Miss May McDowell, 20 years old, daughter of Samuel McDowell, Windsor avenue, died Thursday night after a lingering illness. Deceased was a niece of Mrs. Wm. Bush and Simuel McDowell, of Amherstburg, and a cousin of Messrs. And Misses Foster, of Malden. The funeral took place on Saturday. Deceased was a general favourite." Gertrude's brother Benjamin Arthur McDowell was born on July 15, 1889. His brother Frederick Robert was born on June 14, 1891, but sadly passed away the following month on July 22, 1891.

Ethel Eloise McDowell is the next child of Samuel McDowell and Mary Elizabeth Smith. She was born on June 21, 1892 in Windsor. According to her marriage record, she married Louis Franklin Taylor, the son of Frank Taylor and Doshea Wilson, on October 23, 1920. Ethel sadly passed away on July 22, 1984 as was reported in *The Windsor Star* on July 25th. Her obituary says "TAYLOR – Eloise Ethel, 96 years, July 22, 1984 at Beacon Hill Lodge, formerly of Windsor Ave. Predeceased by her husband Louis Taylor (1957). Dear mother of Louis (a former member of the National Parole Board) Willowdale. Two grandchildren also survive. Resting at the Anderson Funeral Home, 895 Ouellette Ave. from 7pm Tuesday. Will rest at the First Baptist Church, (Mercer at Tuscorora St.) from 12 noon Wednesday, July 25, until 1 pm, time of Service. Rev. Mack Brown officiating. Interment Windsor Grove Cemetery."

Ethel's brother Sherman was born on February 12, 1896. He married Ida Mae Brooks, daughter of Daniel Brooks and Eliza Lewis, on May 31, 1924 in Windsor. On January 9, 1964 *The Windsor Star* reported that Sherman McDowell passed away. His obituary says "Hotel Figure Dies at 67 – Sherman Smith (Chief) McDowell, 67, former head porter at the Prince

Edward Hotel, died Wednesday at IODE Memorial Hospital. He lived at 1093 Windsor Ave. 'Chief' as he was called by his fellow workers and hotel guests, was employed by the hotel for approximately 32 years. During his years as head porter of the downtown hotel, Mr. McDowell's main job was setting up travellers' display rooms. He worked at his job until he became ill in September, 1960. During the First World War, he served overseas with the 18th Battalion, CEF. Surviving are his wife, Ida Marie; a brother Arthur, of Windsor; a sister, Mrs. Eloise Taylor, also of Windsor, and three nieces."

I could not find a birth record for Sherman's brother Samuel Lawrence, but he is referenced a few times in the press. On September 4, 1908, *The Amherstburg Echo* shared "S.L. McDowell, son of Samuel McDowell, of Windsor, and C.L. Wells, of Sandwich have been ordained preachers of the colored Baptist Church by Western Ontario. Ordained at the age of 23, Lawrence S. McDowell has the distinction of being the youngest clergyman in Canada. The ordination service took place in the McDougall street Baptist church Thursday evening, the young candidate having passed the ministerial council examination in the afternoon. Rev. L.S. Hughson, of the Bruce? Avenue Baptist church preached the ordination sermon and he was profuse in his praise and congratulation of Mr. McDowell. That the latter did so well in college and before the council is no surprise to those who know him. He was one of the brightest pupils at the Windsor Collegiate Institute and his teachers predicted a brilliant future for him. He preached in the McDougall street Baptist church on Sunday morning. In September, he will return to college for further preparation. Mr. and Mrs. Samuel McDowell, Windsor avenue, are the parents of the youthful minister. They and his friends are naturally quite proud of him."

Not long after this article was printed, *The Amherstburg Echo* wrote, on October 2, 1908, "Lawrence McDowell, one of Windsor's best known colored men and a graduate of the

Collegiate Institute, left on Monday for Richmond, Va., where he will continue his studies for this ministry.” He is mentioned again on June 3, 1910 when *The Amherstburg Echo* reported “Samuel Lawrence McDowell, son of Mr. and Mrs. S.L. McDowell, Windsor avenue, Windsor, formerly of Amherstburg, has sent word to his parents that he has passed his final examination in theology at the Virginia Union University at Richmond, Virginia, where he has been studying for the past three or four years. At the graduating exercises Mr. McDowell was literally showered with presents from fellow students and the professors. He was popular with his different classes and the teachers. In all his examinations he passed with honors, and during the past year was frequently called on to teach the class in theology in the temporary absence of the professors. Mr. McDowell immediately after being graduated left for Toronto, Ont., where he becomes pastor of the University Avenue Baptist church, a large and influential congregation. Mr. McDowell was a bright student while at the Windsor Collegiate Institute and his friends predicted he would shine in his college course.”

The Amherstburg Echo mentions Rev. S. Lawrence McDowell on April 19, 1912, writing “Rev. S. Lawrence McDowell ... The pastor of the University Avenue Baptist church, Toronto, delivered a lecture at the First Baptist church, McDougall street, Windsor, Friday night on the subject, ‘Have the sons of Ham a place in history?’ Rev. Mr. McDowell is a son of Mrs. Samuel McDowell, Windsor avenue, Windsor, and received his preliminary education in Amherstburg and Windsor. His career in the ministry has been marked with a considerable degree of success.

Over a decade later, in 1923, *The Border Cities’ Star* reported “Dr. M’Dowell To Talk Sunday – Former Windsor Man Will Conduct Services In Church Here – Dr. S. Lawrence McDowell, pastor of the First Baptist Church, Brownsville, Tenn., will preach at the evening service in First Baptist Church, Windsor, Sunday. Dr. McDowell is a speaker of wide experience,

having been stationed in several churches in the north as well as the south. He was formerly pastor of the University Avenue Baptist Church at Toronto. One Tuesday night at 8 o'clock Dr. McDowell will lecture on 'The Negro Facing the Future.' The meeting will be open to the general public. Dr. McDowell is a former Windsor man, being the oldest son of Mrs. Mary McDowell, 511 Windsor avenue. The morning service in the First Baptist Church will be conducted by the pastor, Rev. H.L. Talbot. His subject will be 'The Three Survivors.' It was also reported on January 26, 1950 in *The Amherstburg Echo* that "Rev. S. Lawrence McDowell, a former moderator of the Amherstburg convention of the B.M.E. Church died Monday at Nashville, Tennessee, after a lengthy illness."

Lawrence's sister May is mentioned in *The Amherstburg Echo* on December 20, 1907 after her passing. It says "Miss May McDowell, 20 years old, daughter of Samuel McDowell, Windsor avenue, died Thursday night after a lingering illness. Deceased was a niece of Mrs. Wm. Bush and Simuel McDowell, of Amherstburg, and a cousin of Messrs. and Misses Foster, of Malden. The funeral took place on Saturday. Deceased was a general favourite."

Now that I've discussed the children of Mary Elizabeth and Samuel McDowell, I'll end this section with a few more details about Mary and Samuel. On November 4, 1910 *The Amherstburg Echo* printed Samuel's obituary which says "The funeral of the late Samuel McDowell, whose death notice appeared in the last issue, took place Saturday afternoon to Windsor Grove cemetery and was largely attended by friends and relatives from this town. Mr. McDowell was a son of the late John McDowell, and was born in Anderdon fifty-five years ago. He was one of a large family, only one of whom is now living, Benjamin, of Toledo. He moved to Amherstburg as a young man and was here married to Mary Smith, daughter of the late Capt. James A. Smith. Mrs. McDowell is sister of Mrs. W.H. Bush and Clarence Smith, of this town;

Roman Smith, of Cleveland, and J.L. Smith, of Marquette, Mich. Mr. and Mrs. McDowell moved to Windsor some 28 years ago, and became not only one of the best know chefs on the great lakes, but was one of the most highly respected citizens of Windsor. He had charge of the kitchen on the big steel steamer Amasa Stone, for years, and often catered to John D. Rockefeller, J. Pierpont Morgan, and other well known financiers on trips up the lakes. He was compelled to give up his position a short time ago owing to heart trouble, and this caused his death. Besides his widow, he leaves the following family: Rev. Lawrence, pastor University Baptist church, Toronto; Arthur B., clerk, Windsor postoffice; Roman, a mariner and Ella Louise, at home.”

Over a decade later, Mary’s obituary was printed in *The Amherstburg Echo* which said “Amherstburg homes were saddened by the death in Windsor, Sunday evening, of Mrs. Mary Elizabeth McDowell, widow of the late Samuel McDowell, of that city. She had been a patient sufferer for more than two years. Funeral services were held at the family home, 511 Windsor avenue, Wednesday afternoon, to the First Baptist there, followed by burial in Windsor Grove cemetery. Mrs. McDowell came from one of Amherstburg’s old families. Her maiden name was Mary Elizabeth Smith, and she was a daughter of the late Capt. James A. Smith, who is well remembered in Amherstburg. She was married here about 39 years ago to Mr. McDowell, and they spent all their married life in the Border Cities. Surviving her is the following family: Rev. Lawrence McDowell, of Durham, N.C.; Roman of Detroit; Arthur, mail carrier, of Windsor; Mrs. Lewis Taylor, of Detroit, and Sherman, at home. Besides she leaves the following brothers and sisters: John Smith, of Lorain; Joseph, of Marquette; Philo, of Waynesboro, Pa; Mrs. Wm. H. Bush, of Amherstburg, and Mrs. H. Weeden, of Louisville, Ky., to all of whom sincere sympathy is extended.”

The Border Cities' Star also printed an obituary for Mary which shares further details. It says “Mrs. M. Mc’Dowell – Resident of Windsor for 42 Years Passes; Amherstburg Native – Mrs. Mary McDowell, 511 Windsor avenue, died Sunday at her residence. She was an old resident of Windsor, having lived here for 42 years, coming here from Amherstburg, her birthplace. The late Mrs. McDowell was active in church work, and was a member of the Board of Management of the Home of the Friendless. Surviving her are one daughter, Mrs. Louis Taylor, of Windsor, and four sons, Rev. Lawrence McDowell, of Durham, N.C., Arthur, Sherman and Roman, all of Windsor. Funeral services will be held at the First Baptist church, Wednesday, at 2 p.m. Interment will be made in Windsor Grove 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 where we will celebrate another amazing family.