

The Hyder Family History Part 1 – The Oldest Man in Ontario

For this month's family history, I will highlight the Hyder family. The Hyder family's story begins with John Hyder. He married three times, but I was only able to identify one of his wives, Caroline. The earliest mention of John Hyder may be from *The Amherstburg Echo* on November 15, 1889 which reported "Mr. Hyder is building an addition to his house." Mr. Hyder's first name isn't mentioned, so I'm not completely sure that this is the correct person.

A few years later John Hyder's obituary appeared in *The Amherstburg Echo* on June 24, 1892. It said "John Hider, the oldest man in Ontario, died at Harrow, on Wednesday of last week, at the age of 109 years, having been born in Virginia in 1783, in slavery. He came to this country some time in the beginning of the present century, and worked for some years in Amherstburg, for the father of the present Lieut. Governor Schultz of Manitoba, afterwards removing to Colchester, where he lived over half a century, having been known as 'old man' Hider, all that time. He was married three times, the families by his first two wives being resident in the United States, where one son is now 85 years of age. His third wife, one son Charles, one married daughter, Mrs. Wm. Talbot, and two unmarried daughters are living in this township. He remembered George Washington, General Jackson and a number of the old-timers of that day, and took great pleasure in recounting incidents of the early slave days. He was a veteran of the rebellion of 1837-38. The funeral services took place on Friday, Deacon Matthew Matthews preaching the sermon at the A.M.E. church, Harrow, and the interment taking place at Gilgal." John's death record reports that he died on June 15th, 1892 in Colchester South. John's obituary mentions that he fought in the Upper Canada Rebellion of 1837-1838, and in the book *New Canaan*, Milo Johnson states that he fought with the Essex Colored Battalion and "probably received a land grant in Colchester South Township for his patriotism and participation."

Johnson adds that John “established a farm on Lot 7 of the 5th Concession in the Gilgal Village area where he was known for his pottery making business.”

Several decades later, on April 18, 1930, *The Amherstburg Echo* printed a story titled ‘Early Harrow History Reviewed’ and in the article it mentions Hyder, stating “and next Snake lane was a house owned by ‘Sunny’ Griffin, then Wallace Webster had a place now owned by Roy Pastorius. On a corner on the main road was a log school for the colored people, Mr. Hyder lived next, then Mr. Hanns, Mr. Carr, the hotel there was used as a dwelling, then there was a wagon and blacksmith shop owned by Walter and Ira Pastorius.”

John Hyder’s wife Caroline passed away a few years after John on July 14, 1896 in Colchester South at the age of 63. Her obituary from *The Amherstburg Echo* shares a few more details and says “Mrs. John Hyder died at her home in Harrow, on Tuesday night. She has been almost? helpless for several years and ? reached a ripe old age. Her husband died about two years ago. One son, Charles and four daughters, Mrs. Wm. Talbot and three ? who survive. The funeral took places yesterday.”

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 2.