

The Coates Family History Part 2 – The Auto Pioneer

Next is George Henry Coates. According to his birth record, George Henry was born on December 22, 1898 in Colchester. Just like with Oda's birth record, there is also an interesting note on his birth record by his sister Josephine which confirms his date of birth. The note says "I am an Elder sister being 8 years senior and I was in the home just after my brother George Coates was born as I lived there and I know that he was born on the 22nd day of December 1898 and [illegible word] record was lost by fire about 25 years ago." George went on to marry Maud Garnet Boyd, the daughter of Anthony Boyd and Hattie Turner, on December 25, 1918. At the time, George was a 20-year-old farmer, while Maud was 19 and listed as "at home on farm" for her occupation. Their children include Betty, Alger, Lorraine, Barbara, Sharon, Judy and Gwendolyn.

Betty's obituary from March 4, 1969 says "COATES – Betty-Jean, 45 years, March 4, 1969 at Metropolitan Hospital. Late residence 447 Elliott St. E.A. member of the Tanner AME Church. Dear daughter of George. Dear sister of Rev. Alger Coates, Windsor; Mrs. Fred (Lorraine) Gibbs, Gary, Ind.; Mrs. Roy (Barbara) DeSheilds, Regina; Mrs. Donald (Sharon) Franklin, Ann Arbor, Mich.; Mrs. Clifford (Judy) White, Montreal; Mrs. Gerald (Gwendolyn) Green, Windsor."

Alger is next. He married Lillian A. Morgan on September 22, 1956. He passed away on December 6, 2003 in Decatur, Illinois and his obituary reads as follows "The Reverend George Alger Coates was the son of George Henry and Garnett Boyd Coates. He was born July 29, 1926 in Windsor, Ontario, Canada. He completed his primary and secondary education in Windsor before attending Assumption College in Windsor and graduating from Wilberforce University, Wilberforce, Ohio. He was awarded an honorary doctorate degree from Monrovia College,

Monrovia Liberia West Africa. Rev. Coates was united in Holy Matrimony to Lillian A. Morgan on September 22, 1956. To this union there were four sons, Gary, George, Wendell and Aaron. After being ordained an itinerant elder in the African Methodist Episcopal Church, his first assignment was to Highland A.M.E. Church in Amherst, Nova Scotia, Canada. Under his leadership, extensive repairs were made to the church structure. While in Nova Scotia, he pastored some outlying congregations and was actively involved in the community. From Nova Scotia, Rev. Coates was assigned to Tanner A.M.E. Church in Windsor. A new church and parsonage were completed and the mortgage burned during his tenure. Rev. Coates arrived in Decatur, Illinois from Windsor in 1970 to serve as pastor of St. Peter's A.M.E. Church and was given orders for the thirty-fourth time in September, 2003 at the Illinois Annual Conference to return to St. Peter's. Under his guidance, an educational building that had been a long time dream for the congregation became a reality, renovations were made to the lower level of the original structure, the sanctuary was made handicap accessible with the installation of an elevator and the mortgage has been burned. Establishment of the Marland Elliott Scholarship Fund which has given thousands of dollars to assist those within the church seeking to further their education, an additional church parking lot and restoration of the pipe organ can also be credited to his leadership. For a number of years he conducted Bible studies at the YWCA, and assisted with the Summer Park Worship services in Fairview Park. Since his arrival in Decatur, he has been an active participant with the Ecumenical Lenten and Good Friday services which has brought about understanding and fellowship among the participating churches. He has been instrumental in having the church to co-sponsor a weekly food pantry with a neighboring church and to be a participating congregation with the Faith in Action Program of Macon County. He has served on the Board of One Church One Child and in 1999 members of the United States Congress selected

him as an "Angel in Adoption". Because of his love of children and interest in their education, Rev. Coates has gone into the schools over the years to follow up on problems that students were having; he worked to increase the number of black teachers in the schools and to have minorities placed in leadership positions within District 61. He was a member of the Rotary and a former Mason and Shriner. Rev. Coates departed for his heavenly home at 4:40 a.m. on Saturday, December 6, 2003. He leaves to cherish fond and happy memories his wife, Lillian; sons, George Jr. (Gwendolyn) of Decatur, Attorney Wendell (Jestine) and Dr. Aaron (Dr. LaKimberly) of Rockford; grandchildren, Jessica, Kendell, Morgan, Cameron, Jordan of Rockford, George Kalin and Genae of Decatur; sisters, Lorraine Gibbs of New York, Barbara (Roy) De Shields of Regina Saskatchewan, Sharron (Clarence) Guienze of New Jersey and Judy (Richard) Coleman of Michigan; "adopted sons", Tony Holly of Bloomington and Lamont Chambliss of Florida; nieces, nephews, relatives, the St. Peter's Church Family and friends. A son, Gary, his parents and two sisters, Betty and Gwendolyn preceded him in death."

Alger's sister Lorraine married Fred Gibbs on May 23, 1952 in Indiana and the couple resided in Gary, Indiana. Lorraine's sister Barbara married Roy DeSheilds and lived in Regina, Saskatchewan. Barbara's sister Sharon married twice two Donald Franklin of Ann Arbor and Clarence Guienze of New Jersey. Sharon's sister Judy married Clifford White (Montreal) and Richard Coleman (Detroit), while Judy's sister Gwendolyn married Gerald Green (Windsor).

Now we'll return to their father George Henry Coates. On July 30, 1963, *The Windsor Star* printed an article about George Coates titled "Conference For Church – George H. Coates Area Delegate." It says "George Henry Coates, of 447 Elliott St. E., will represent the more than 700 Negroes from African Methodist Episcopal Churches throughout Ontario and the Maritimes at the 8th biennial conference of the Connectional Laymen's Organization of the A.M.E. Church,

August 5 through 10 in Detroit. Mr. Coates is the president of the Local Society and of the Canadian Lay Organization. He will be joined at the convention by the members of Tanner A.M.E. Church, Windsor, and Lay delegates from as far away as the Atlantic sea coast. The main purpose of this year's convention is to improve and enhance the status of the A.M.E. Church on every level. The six-day meeting will bring together men and women from Canada and all over the continental United States. Mr. Coates noted that much time will be spent deliberating on this year's theme, The Role of Christian Leadership in Our Changing Society. He echoed the words of Herbert L. Dudley, organization president from Detroit, in saying, 'I have long cherished the belief that during these times of stress and strain when there is so much tension and evidence of bitterness and hate exhibited on the part of both races, that there is a definite responsibility and obligation on the part of men of goodwill. 'Men who profess Christian beliefs should exert their influence to bring the impact of their training and backgrounds to bear upon many of those problems which affect and beset our society today. Too often or shall I say too long, have we allowed these matters which affect our relationships as human beings to be dealt with entirely by the politicians, race fanatics and hate peddlers. We feel that it is time for men of God to speak out, to join hands as Christians and make our viewpoint known and our influence felt.' He added that, 'No one could ever convince me that the heart of Canada is not right, but many of the images we get are not truly representative of the soul of our country. I believe that our men, women and children need make their influence felt. As we meet in convention, we are hoping to do our part in mobilizing the moral and religious forces of our community and nation to meet the challenge.'" Mr. Coates' son, Rev. Alger Coates, of Tanner A.M.E. Church, spoke even further on the upcoming convention and said, 'As we come together we will stress better relationship between all races. The A.M.E. Church has been a leader in this field for a number of years and is

well known for its outstanding contributions. He stressed that ‘What comes out of this conference is certain to help all Windsorites on the local church level.’

George Henry passed away on September 29, 1993. His obituary appeared in the *Windsor Star* on October 4th which said “COATES – George Henry, 94 years, died at Riverview Hospital on September 29, 1993. Late of Windsor. Predeceased by wife Garnie (1954), Rachel (1969) and Elsie (1991). Survived by daughter Lorraine (Mrs. Fred Gibbs), Gary, Ind.; son Rev. Alger Coates and his wife Lillian [,] Decatur, II.; DAUGHTERS Barbara (Mrs. Roy DeSheild), Regina, Sharron (Mrs. Clarence Guienze), Cherry Hill, N.J., Judy (Mrs. Richard Coleman), Detroit; and step-son Robert Ross, Detroit. Predeceased by daughters Betty (1969) and Gwendolyn (1992), 4 brothers and 3 sisters. Also survived by 14 grandchildren, 15 great-grandchildren and a host of nieces, nephews, relatives and friends. Mr. Coates is retired from Chrysler Canada (Walter Metal Products) after 30 years service. He was a Life Member and very active at Tanner A.M.E.; Lay President of the Canadian Annual Conference A.M.E. Church; Grand Chaplain, past member and Life Member of North American Masonic Lodge #21 Prince Hall A. & A.M.”

The next day, on October 5, 1993 *The Windsor Star* shared a tribute in the article “Black auto pioneer’s funeral” which says “The funeral of George Henry Coates, one of the first blacks to find skilled trades work in the Windsor automotive industry, will be held Wednesday. Mr. Coates died Wednesday in Riverview Hospital at age 94. He had been in poor health since suffering a stroke nearly a decade ago, said his son, Rev. Alger Coates, a paster in Decatur, Ill. Born in Colchester South, Mr. Coates worked in Windsor as a mold maker with Walker Metal Products from 1935 until his retirement about 30 years ago. His example ‘was instrument in other blacks following him into the industry,’ his son said. When he was 19 year [sic] old, Mr. Coates became active with the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME) and the association

became stronger as the years went on. When the Tanner AME Church was torn down in the 1950s, Mr. Coates helped his son, then paster, to build the new Tanner church on McDougall Street. He was dedicated to serving the church, family members recalled, and for years he was lay president of the Canadian annual AME Church conference. Mr. Coates was also active in the Masonic Lodge, serving as master and helping to raise funds for a lodge in the Niagara and Mercer streets area. He was also involved in civic activities and helped several Liberal politicians' campaign in Windsor, including the late Arthur Reaume. Among the survivors are six adult children, 14 grandchildren and 15 great-grandchildren. Because a large number of mourners is expected, the funeral will be held at the larger BME Church, 685 University Ave., at 1 p.m. E. Morris Sutton funeral home is handling arrangements.”

Adeline and William's next child, Roland, was born on November 7, 1900, while his sister Blanche Dell was born on December 24, 1901 and Almana was born on January 24, 1903.

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.