

Chuckee:

Finding a Forgotten Family, Discovering our Connection

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Shortly after my presentation on the Chuckee Family Connection at the Emancipation Festival's annual Grey County Black History Event at Grey Roots Museum & Archives in April, 2014, I was contacted by Guylaine Petrin of York University with some pertinent information that she had come across concerning a member of the Chuckee family. Since Guylaine's initial contact with me, she has continued to generously share additional discoveries concerning various ancestors in our family tree. Thanks to Guylaine's expert research skills, invaluable suggestions, and thought-provoking email discussions, I now have a clearer historical view and deeper understanding of some of my ancestors, and in particular, the Chuckees.

My sister Sandy and I first stumbled across the Chuckee family while researching the possibility of our family's ancestral connection to Thomas Henry Miller of Owen Sound. In the beginning we were only slightly intrigued by this unusual surname. However, we eventually became captivated by this little known family for a couple of reasons; firstly, no one seemed to know anything about them, and secondly, who were they? The 1851 Canada Census¹ gave us basic information; names, where they were born, and their ages. But it couldn't explain how or why they ended up on the Miller farm in Sullivan Township. One entry noted that this family with the surname of "Chalkee" were "non-members" of the Miller family. We needed to find the answer to a simple question: to whom did they belong?

It has always saddened me to think that someone had walked this earth, lived a life, interacted with others and then, in the end, had been forgotten by history. So even though we didn't think at the time that these people named "Chalkee" were directly related to our family, both my sister Sandy and I kept wandering back to this unusual name. They deserved (as everyone does), to have their historical presence acknowledged, even if in a small way. Eventually and quite surprisingly, we discovered who they were, and most significantly to us, how they belonged to our family tree.

When we first found Henry and Priscilla Miller in the 1851 Canada Census,² we had determined that there were two families living in the same one-story log cabin on their farm, located in Sullivan Township on Concession #1, Part 1 of Lot 22. On closer examination of the census, we

¹1851 Census. Township of Sullivan, County of Grey. Schedule: A; Roll: C_11723; Pages 17 & 18, Line 1-3

²1851 Census. Township of Sullivan, County of Grey, Page 5, 6, Lines 47 – 50 and Pages 17 & 18, Line 1-3

also realized that not all of the pages were in numerical sequence. The second family, consisting of three people who were residing with the Millers, was revealed to us quite a few turns of the microfilmed pages away. (This census takes up three pages of columned questions for each resident which equates to two numbered pages!) These three were listed as: a man named "Ira" or "Isia" "Chalkee" (age 30), born in Africa; his wife Catharine (age 21), born in America and their son John (age 5), who was born in Canada. If their son John's age was correct, we surmised that this family had been in Canada since at least 1845 or 1846.

Due in part to the bad handwriting of the census enumerators and the poor quality of the microfilmed pages, it was difficult to decipher some of the overall 1851 Census information. This was compounded by the fact that many of the pages are numerically out of order, which we quickly found out is not unusual for an historical census.

This particular census also added to our ever-growing list of questions. The first being (as previously mentioned), who were the Chalkees? The next being, who were the two Miller children listed as living with Henry and Priscilla: Henry (age 15) and William (age 7)? We weren't exactly sure who the parents of these boys were. We thought they may be grandsons as it didn't make sense that the two boys could be the sons of Henry and Priscilla, since her age was listed as being 63 years old. If that were true, we felt that she would have most probably been past child-bearing age, at least concerning the younger boy.

We then perused the 1861 Census,³ where we located Henry and Priscilla Miller still on their farm in Sullivan Township. With them was a woman named "Catrin Cuckee"! We immediately assumed it was the same woman as in the 1851 Census named Catharine Chalkee, and although she was listed as being married, both her husband and her son John were missing. William (now aged 17) was still there, but not the young Henry (who would have been 25). However, there was an eighteen year old man named Thomas, who, according to a note in the Census, resided in Owen Sound. There were also three other children listed as Millers, including one named John, who we determined was probably Catharine Chalkee/ Catrin Cuckee's son, mistakenly listed with a Miller surname.

We were still unsure regarding the additional children's parentage. Our theory had not changed: we thought that the "Cuckee" woman was a farm labourer assisting the aging Millers on their farm. The space within the columns identifying family members and non-members was left blank for everyone listed in this household. The spot provided for how many families were living together in the same dwelling shows that only one family was residing in Henry and Priscilla Miller's log cabin. This census still left us no further ahead and added more questions concerning the true relationships between the people who were living on the Sullivan Township farm.

³1861 Census. Township of Sullivan, County of Grey, Page 17, Lines 26-33

We were still going on the assumption, and a whole lot of blind faith, that the inspirational Thomas Henry Miller of Owen Sound was the son of Henry and Priscilla Miller. Of course we also realized that if our theory was correct, the “Miller” children who were listed residing on the Sullivan Township farm in both the 1851 and the 1861 Canada Census, could belong to Thomas Henry Miller.

We had already found Thomas Henry Miller in the 1861 Canada Census⁴ living in Owen Sound with his wife Sarah and a brood of children, including an eighteen-year-old son named Thomas H. When cross-matching the 1861 Census information between the Thomas Henry Miller family of Owen Sound, and the Henry Miller family of Sullivan Township, we immediately noticed the similarities concerning the two Thomases, and surmised that the same person had been listed twice.

In the 1861 Census all members of a specific household were to be listed in the census as part of that respective household, even if they were away during the exact time that the enumeration took place. So, of course Thomas H.’s father listed him as living at the Owen Sound address even though he was physically present at his grandparents’ farm in Sullivan Township at that specific time. Since this census was taken in the spring, we also appreciated the fact that an eighteen year old grandson could very well have been sent to his grandparents’ farm to help with the spring planting.

In the 1861 Census, the enumerators were to include anyone that was visiting a respective household, and to note under Column Six (“Residence if out of Limits”), the location of that visitor’s usual place of residence. This important notation was one of the main factors helping us to determine that the Owen Sound Thomas and the Sullivan Township Thomas were one and the same person. We believed that this conclusion supplied us with proof that our theory concerning the relationship between “Father” Thomas Henry Miller, and Henry and Priscilla, was correct.

There was no listing for Henry and Priscilla Miller in Sullivan Township in the 1871 Canada Census, so, in an effort to find out what happened to them and their farm, we decided to search the land transfer records. We were hoping that this exercise would offer us more proof concerning the father/son relationship between Thomas Henry Miller of Owen Sound and Henry Miller of Sullivan Township and, with any luck, give us the missing link(s) that we needed in order to prove our direct lineage.

While researching at the Grey County Archives, we unearthed a wealth of information in the land transfer books which led us to Henry Miller’s Last Will and Testament. Henry not only bequeathed his son Thomas Miller of Owen Sound his Sullivan Township farm (hence proving

⁴Library and Archives Canada; Ottawa, Ontario, Canada; *Census Returns For 1861*; Roll: C-1027-1028, Page 37, Line 28-36

without a doubt our theory), but the old man reached out and gave us an abundance of extraordinary ancestral information including the link that we had been searching so long for.

Henry Miller's will also informed us that he had a daughter named "*Catherine Chuckee*" to whom he bequeathed part of a sub-divided Park Lot in the town of Owen Sound. That name "Chuckee"! A very unexpected, yet exciting, biological connection was revealed. We immediately recognized that Catharine Chalkee, Catrin Cuckee and Catherine Chuckee were one and the same person!

Henry Miller had owned six lots in the town of Owen Sound, which had been subdivided. In his will he describes a "Park Lot opposite the residence of John Frost Esqr. and immediately above Quinns Tannery and situate[d] on the West side of Poulett Street in the said Town of Owen Sound and known as Beatty's subdivisions...".⁵ Henry left the other five sub-divided lots to various members of his immediate family, including my great grandfather, James Miller, and a grandson named William.

Not having any proof of the true parentage regarding William Miller, and compounded by the fact that of all the children found listed on Henry and Priscilla's farm in 1861, only William was named in his will. Why was that? We needed answers to our never-ending list of questions. We began our long journey down a very perplexing and often disconcerting path that contained many pieces of conflicting and questionable information. It took us quite a long period of time before the many facets of the Miller-Chuckee family slowly began to fall into place.

After much research, we came to the conclusion that the young Henry who was originally found living at the Sullivan Township farm in 1851 was the same person named Thomas who was listed twice in the 1861 Census; once in Owen Sound with his father Thomas Henry Miller, and secondly at the Sullivan Township farm of his grandparents. He was Thomas Henry Miller Jr. who usually went by his middle name of "Henry". We also found the Young Henry (as we came to call him), in the 1865-66 Grey County Directory living with his father Thomas Henry on Scrope Street.

We eventually learned that the Young Henry was a very troubled man. He held an unusually strong belief in temperance and per a notation in his patient file, "The Lord directs him in doing wrong."⁶ He was originally committed by warrant to an eighteen month stay in the Toronto Insane Asylum on 2 December 1870, suffering from "Mania".⁷ However, he was discharged three months early, on March 15th, 1871. He was back in Owen Sound by the time the enumerator came around on April 15th, 1871 with the census questionnaire,⁸ and was listed as living with his wife Margaret, their four children and his father-in-law, Francis Deadman. The

⁵Book 36 – Instrument #64 Registered May 3rd, 1869 Last Will and Testament of Henry Miller

⁶*Toronto Queen Street Asylum Patient Register*, Ontario Archives - RG 10-268

⁷*Toronto Queen Street Asylum Patient Register*, Ontario Archives - RG 10-268

⁸*1871 Census: Owen Sound, Grey North, Ontario; Roll: C-9954; Page: 35; Family No: 140*

enumerator, John Creighton, made a sad and unsettling notation beside Young Henry's family record as follows; "difficult to get information from them they have been told that the object of this was to send them to England as Slaves."⁹

By 1873, Young Henry had moved with his wife, children and father-in-law to Ingersoll, Ontario. Their daughter Elizabeth died there in December, 1876, with Young Henry being the informant. Her obituary notice was printed in the Thursday, December 14, 1876 edition of the *Ingersoll Chronicle*.¹⁰ Young Henry was listed in the 1877 Ingersoll Voters List¹¹ as living at 17 Bell St., Ingersoll; his occupation was Teamster, and he owned the property where he lived. Young Henry Miller died on the 23rd of March 1877,¹² after suffering from paralysis for three weeks.

We came to the conclusion that the grandson named William, who the older Henry referred to in his will, was actually Catherine and Isaiah Chuckee's son, William, who was listed as residing on the Sullivan Township farm in both the 1851 and 1861 Canada Census, and was erroneously listed with the surname of Miller. We found no other grandson named William that was living at the time of the older Henry's death in the spring of 1869.

Although the older Henry's will had confirmed many of our theories regarding various family connections, some of the new information found in this marvellous document added to our ever-growing research list. It was amazing to solidify our theory that Henry Miller of Sullivan Township was indeed the father of the respected Thomas Henry Miller of Owen Sound, and that his son was the Henry Miller who we knew was the father of our great grandfather James Miller. That he also had a daughter named Catherine Chuckee had been a terrific hidden gem!

That surname Chalkee, Cuckee, Chuckee again piqued our curiosity and before we realized it, we became focused on finding out more about the Chuckee branch of our family and started down a truly bumpy road.

Who was this sister of the famous Father Miller? What happened to the Chuckee children? Slowly we started to unravel a diverse and often-troubling narrative concerning Catherine Miller-Chuckee and her family.¹³

According to Paul White in his book, *Owen Sound; The Port City*,¹⁴ Isaiah Chuckee was a young runaway slave who had been born in Africa, and had been put on a slave ship bound for the

⁹1871 Census: Owen Sound, Grey North, Ontario; Roll: C-9954; Page: 35; Family No: 140

¹⁰Archives of Ontario; Series: MS935; Reel: 16; Archives of Ontario. Registrations of Deaths, 1869-1938. MS 935, Reels 1-615

¹¹*Ingersoll 1877 Voters List* - First Ward--Subdivision Number One on Page 3, Line #101

¹²Archives of Ontario; Series: MS935; Reel: 16; Archives of Ontario. Registrations of Deaths, 1869-1938. MS 935, Reels 1-615

¹³We found Catherine's given name spelled in various ways; Catrin, Catharine and Catherine. I decided to adopt the Catherine spelling variation which we found in her father Henry Miller's April, 1868 Last Will and Testament.

¹⁴Paul White. *Owen Sound, The Port City*. Natural Heritage Press: Toronto, 2000; Page 20.

Americas. For whatever reason, Isaiah was not included when the rest of the ship's human cargo had been unloaded upon docking at their destination; instead he was kept on a man-of-war ship for fourteen years. While docked in New York, Isaiah jumped ship and made his way to Toronto and freedom. He eventually secured employment as a crew-hand on W.C. Boyd's Georgian Bay schooner the *Fly* and arrived in the Owen Sound area around 1840/41. Paul White also mentions in his book, that it was thought that when Isaiah left the employment of W.C. Boyd, he went south and settled in Glenelg Township.

Thanks to the excellent information that Guylaine Petrin uncovered in her research we now know that on February 23, 1843 a man named "Isaiah Chokee" appears as part of a list of settlers who petitioned the government for an extension regarding the time and criteria limitations to qualify for land grants.¹⁵ Isaiah eventually received his location ticket on 10 January 1845 for a 50 acre plot of land situated on Concession 1, Division 2 of Lot 21 in Holland Township.¹⁶ This property was located on the east side of the Garafraxa Road, just up the road and on the opposite side from the Henry Miller, Sullivan Township farm.

Henry and Priscilla Miller's daughter, Catherine, married an "Isaiah Cohee" on 20 April 1846¹⁷ in Holland Township. Isaiah was still trying to cultivate his land (in order that he meet the required criteria so he could receive his deeded land grant), when we found him residing with his in-laws in their log cabin on the Sullivan Township farm in the 1851 Canada Census. The early Grey County settlers found it very challenging to clear and plant enough acres to ensure that a farm could sustain a family through the long harsh Ontario winters. The focus needed to be on meeting the government's specified criteria in order to receive his crown patent. It made sense that Isaiah would take accommodations at Henry and Priscilla's farm which was very close by, until he could build a cabin that could house his own family on his own land. According to the Ontario Land Record Indexes¹⁸ the Order of Council authorized Isaiah's patent for his plot of land on 22nd of March, 1854.

Through the various censuses, historical documents and birth, marriage and death records that we have uncovered concerning this branch of the Miller family, the Chuckee surname has been listed under many different spellings: Chacko, Chalkee, Chickee, Chickgee, Chokee, Cohee, Cuckee and Cuekee.

In our family tree, I chose to use the spelling of "Chuckee" since that is the spelling that we found in the April, 1868 Last Will and Testament of Henry Miller of Sullivan Township.

¹⁵*Upper Canada Land Petitions 1843-1844*

¹⁶*Report of the First Concession of the Township of Holland. Archives of Ontario. MS 5395 - Certain Lands of Garafraxa Road 1844-1855 RG1 A-VI-16, Volume 3*

¹⁷*Wellington District Marriage Register; Volume 9, Part 1, 1840-1852*

¹⁸*Ontario Archives Land Record Index Page # 2161 Archival Ref: RG01 Series- C13 Vol 149 Page 48*

Since Isaiah could neither read nor write, the census enumerators would have written his name phonetically. I must also assume that as the future generations became literate, they too began spelling their surname the way they pronounced it and this varies, depending on the branch of this family. One could speculate that perhaps Isaiah chose this unusual last name because it was his African given name.

We discovered that the Chuckee clan were a unique bunch. Unlike her older brother who had his deeply-rooted faith and the respect of all who came to know him, Catherine and most of her children seemed to fall somewhat short. From what we have come to realize, the Chuckees walked a slightly different road than that of the stalwart “Father” Miller.

Catherine Chuckee found herself in trouble with the law, and on December 26, 1855 was convicted of manslaughter and served 155 days in the Grey County Gaol.¹⁹ Unfortunately, we do not know who died at her hands, or the reasons behind it. As a side note, manslaughter seemed to have held a lower punishment than that of a horse thief. On the same list where we found Catherine’s conviction, we also found a John Isaacs who received the hefty sentence of three years and 45 days in the Provincial Penitentiary for stealing a horse.

Isaiah sold the land that he had toiled on for almost 15 years in 1858 and is not included in the 1861 Canada Census²⁰ along with the rest of the family. Although, as previously mentioned, Catherine was listed as being a married woman, at the time of this writing what exactly happened to Isaiah Chuckee still remains a mystery.

After the older Henry died in the spring of 1869 (leaving both Catherine Chuckee and her oldest son, William, property within the town limits of Owen Sound), we found Catherine in the 1871 Canada Census, now listed as a widow, and living in the town of Owen Sound with her children and grandchildren.²¹ We know that Catherine had at least four children with Isaiah Chuckee: William, John Isaiah, Clarissa and Sarah Ann, as all four were listed as “Millers” in the 1861 Census in Sullivan Township. Another daughter named Elizabeth showed up in the 1871 Canada Census,²² listed as being born around 1866. We don’t believe that Elizabeth is Isaiah’s biological daughter, as he was gone from historical records before she was born, although she carried the surname of Chuckee.

We have not found absolute proof that William (Catherine and Isaiah’s oldest son), had any biological children. However, there are several Chuckee grandchildren for whom we cannot

¹⁹Appendix to the Fifteenth Volume of the Journals of the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Canada, Volume 15, Issue 3, From the 26th February to the 10th June, 1857, both days inclusive; Page 51 - *Report of the Number of Prisoners Committed to the County of Grey Gaol*, From the 1st of January, 1855, up to the 5th May, 1857.

²⁰1861 Census. District No. 2, County of Grey, Township of Sullivan, Page 2, Line 28

²¹1871 Census. District No. 37, North Grey County, Sub-District G. Town of Owen Sound, Division 3- Page 13, Lines 13 through 20. Page 14 Line 1

²²1871 Census: Owen Sound, Grey North, Ontario; Roll: C-9954; Page: 13; Family No: 48

prove parentage, although William was the informant for the birth and/or death registration for a couple of these children.

Catherine and Isaiah's second son, John Isaiah Chuckee, married a young English immigrant named Harriet Mortley, who was the daughter of Caroline Saxby and Charles Mortley, on October 11, 1867.²³ The Mortleys resided in Sullivan Township on Concession 1 on Lot 25, just up the road from the Henry Miller farm.

We also discovered a John Chuckee listed twice in that 1871 Canada Census; firstly as residing in Owen Sound, married and living with his wife Harriet, their two children, his mother Catherine, and his four siblings. The second listing has a John Chucker residing in the Kingston Penitentiary.²⁴ For quite a long time, we were not completely positive that the "John Chucker" who was listed as an inmate at Kingston in the census was the same John Chuckee of Owen Sound, as there was some conflicting personal information between the two censuses. Guylaine Petrin then uncovered a prison record for a John Isaiah Chuckee who was convicted of manslaughter in Grey County. We were now reasonably certain that both of these 1871 Canada Census listings were referring to the same man.

I then found a notice in the Thursday, July 16, 1868 edition of the *Owen Sound Advertiser*²⁵ it reported that "*the colored man **Chuckee** who was under remand for the willful murder of his child was finally committed for trial by the Coroner on the verdict of the Jury based on the evidence of Dr. Barnhart who had made the post mortem examination of the body of the child only eleven months old, and who found that the child came to its untimely end by cruelty and excessive beating by the unnatural parent.*"²⁶

John Isaiah Chuckee was ultimately convicted of manslaughter and sentenced to seven years in Kingston Penitentiary on September 22, 1868. He arrived at the Penitentiary on October 7, 1868²⁷ and died there on July 18, 1871²⁸ of Scrofula, which is a painful infection of the lymph nodes in the neck, associated with tuberculosis.

Until John's 1868 manslaughter conviction was uncovered, it had been supposed that he and his wife Harriet had at least three children together: Mary Jane born in 1869, young Harriet born in 1870, and Thomas Wesley born in 1871/72.²⁹ With this development we realized that John Isaiah Chuckee could not have been the biological father of either Baby Harriet or Thomas

²³Archives of Ontario; Series: MS248; Reel: 7

²⁴1871 Census: Kingston Penitentiary, Frontenac, Ontario; Roll: C-9998; Page: 13, Line 9

²⁵BMD Owen Sound Advertiser Transcripts - July 11, 1868-Dec 17, 1868; April 29, 1869 - Dec 2, 1869

²⁶We have checked all of the Chuckee interments at the public Greenwood Cemetery where other Chuckee family members are buried and there is no child with any variation of that surname buried during 1867 or 1868.

²⁷Archives of Ontario; Ref: RG13, Justice, Series D-1, Volume 1045

²⁸Archives of Ontario; Series: MS935; Reel: 2

²⁹Baby Harriet died just before the age of two in 1872 and is interred along with other Chuckee family members in the indigenous plot at Greenwood Cemetery in Owen Sound.

Wesley, who were both born after his incarceration. He definitely was not in Owen Sound during the census enumeration. However, we do contend that Mary Jane could quite possibly be John's natural daughter. Since he was not remanded into custody until mid-1868, his wife, Harriet, could have already been pregnant with his child and delivered in either late 1868, or in the early spring of 1869.

As we continued our research on the Chuckee family, we found John's widowed wife Harriet in the 1881 Canada Census now living as the wife of his older brother, William Chuckee, along with children Mary Jane (age 12), and Thomas Wesley (age 10).³⁰ One could speculate that since both of Harriet's youngest children were born after John went to jail, they may have been fathered by his older brother, William Chuckee.

The 1881 Canada Census³¹ lists Catherine as living with two of her daughters, Clarissa and Sarah, and a house full of Chuckee children; Adaline (age 6), Julia (age 2), John W. (age 1 month), Caleb (age 1), Sarah (age 4), Barbara (age 1) and Mary (age 16). This could be either Thomas Henry Miller's daughter, Mary, or possibly Mary Jane Chuckee – Harriet's daughter and listed twice in the 1881 Census. Unfortunately, there are no fathers named on any of the birth registrations for the children of Clarissa or Sarah Chuckee.

Harriet Mortley-Chuckee's son Thomas Wesley began using the "Chickee" spelling for his surname after he moved from Owen Sound to the Windsor area. Thomas Wesley married Minnie Haynes around 1897. Their first two children died young; a daughter named Minnie at the age of 21 months old in August 1900, and their son James died in 1901. Minnie Haynes and Thomas Chickee had a total of eight children altogether. Thomas Wesley Chickee died in his fifties on July 30, 1924, after suffering from pulmonary tuberculosis for a little more than three years.³² He left his wife Minnie alone to raise their six surviving children. He passed the "Chickee" spelling variation on to his many offspring and descendants. His sister, Mary Jane Chuckee, married Charles Bird from the United States, and they too settled in the Windsor, Ontario area. Mary Jane and Charles had at least six children, with four living to full adulthood.

Catherine, the matriarch of the Chuckee clan, died on September 15, 1886.³³ It is obvious that Catherine and her children did not have an easy life. She herself was jailed for manslaughter at the end of 1855. Her husband Isaiah sold his land that he had worked so hard to cultivate in 1858, and is no longer with the family by the beginning of 1861. Before that decade is through she gives birth to a daughter on her own, and her youngest son John is incarcerated for manslaughter concerning the death of a child. Her mother and her father both passed away, leaving her alone to support her young daughters.

³⁰1881 Census: Owen Sound, Grey North, Ontario; Roll: C_13261; Page: 22; Family No: 111

³¹1881 Census, District 1, Town of Owen Sound, Page 45, Line 1- 10.

³²Archives of Ontario; Series: MS935; Reel: 312; Ontario, Canada, Deaths, 1869-1938

³³Archives of Ontario; Series: MS935; Reel: 43; Ontario, Canada, Deaths, 1869-1938

The 1870s were no easier for Catherine, as she struggled to support herself and her daughters by working as a washer woman. We will never know why Catherine stated that her son John was residing with the family when the census taker came to the door in the spring of 1871, knowing full well that he was in prison for at least another four years. Perhaps she simply thought that he was to be counted as part of their family even though he was “away”. Whatever her reasoning, the unfortunate facts are that a few short months later, in July 1871, John died while still in prison.

Difficult times continued to plague the family throughout the next decade. All three of Catherine’s daughters gave her grandchildren without the benefit of having husbands to help support them. Unfortunately many of these children died before the age of two, most likely due to their impoverished living conditions. There are still six “Chuckee” children that have either been interred in the Greenwood Cemetery, or listed in various censuses, for whom we have not been able to identify parentage.

The Chuckee women suffered the indignities that extreme poverty brings. Catherine’s oldest daughter Clarissa gave birth to two daughters in the Grey County Gaol: first Adaline Chuckee was born in 1874,³⁴ and then another daughter, Clarissa Jane Chuckee, was born four years later. She wasn’t imprisoned as punishment for a criminal act, rather because she had nowhere else to go. According to the court report found in the *Owen Sound Advertiser*, Clarissa was sentenced on November 8, 1878 to six months in the Grey County Gaol. “*Clarissa Chuckee and her child both of colored persuasion, having no abiding place were sent to gaol as vagrants for six months.*” This unfortunate young woman was in the county gaol with a young daughter when baby Clarissa Jane was born just two weeks later, on November 26, 1878.³⁵

When Harriet Mortley-Chuckee died at the young age of 44 years of age on April 4, 1890, she was listed as a widow, and her son Thomas was noted as the informant.³⁶ The next year, in the 1891 Canada Census,³⁷ a Sarah Chickee shows up as a widow residing with two children; daughter Cassie and son Arthur. When we first came across this census listing, we assumed it was the family of Sarah Ann Chuckee, the youngest daughter of Isaiah and Catherine Chuckee. But then we took a 180 degree turn when we found Cassie’s - or rather, “Catherine’s” marriage registration,³⁸ naming her parents as John and Sarah Chickee. We then started to look at the possibility that John Chuckee had a second family with a woman who happened to have the same given name as his younger sister. It wasn’t until after we had unravelled the tumultuous

³⁴Archives of Ontario; Series: MS929; Reel: 15; Archives of Ontario. Registrations of Births and Stillbirths – 1869-1913. MS 929, Reels 1-245

³⁵Archives of Ontario; Series: MS929; Reel: 32; Archives of Ontario. Registrations of Births and Stillbirths – 1869-1913. MS 929, Reels 1-245

³⁶Archives of Ontario; Series: MS935; Reel: 57; Ontario, Canada, Deaths, 1869-1938

³⁷1891 Census: Owen Sound Center Ward, Grey North, Ontario; Roll: T-6339; Family No: 169

³⁸Ontario, Canada. Registrations of Marriages, 1869-1928. MS932, Reels 1-833, 850-880. Archives of Ontario, Toronto

life of John Isaiah Chuckee that we knew for sure that this was not his second family, but probably, as was first suspected, his younger sister's (Sarah Ann) and her family. We have not put much heed in the fact that she is listed as a widow in that census. We have long since come to understand that not all information found in historical documents is accurate.

William Chuckee, who stepped into his brother John's husbandly shoes after he went to prison, and cared for Harriet and the children, died on the March 26, 1901.³⁹ Terri Jackson came across William's obituary printed in the Friday, March 29, 1901 edition of the *Owen Sound Advertiser* where it was noted that he died at his home on Water Street of pneumonia and that he was "better known as Napoleon" and "was always an inoffensive [sic] negro."

Catherine and Isaiah's oldest daughter Clarissa, as previously mentioned, had at least two documented children, and married three times. The first marriage was to a widower named John Henry from Texas, on December 23, 1893.⁴⁰ She married a second time to a man named Morgan, but I have not found documentation to match as yet. Clarissa married for a third and final time in Port Dover, on September 22, 1907, to Henry Thomas from Springfield, Massachusetts.⁴¹ Clarissa died at the Kent County House of Refuge on December 9, 1930.⁴²

We know that Sarah Ann Chuckee had at least four children. Her two young sons both died before the age of two, and are buried in Greenwood Cemetery in Owen Sound. Caleb Alexander Chuckee died on August 21, 1882,⁴³ and Alexander Wilson Chuckee died at the age of one on March 6, 1883.⁴⁴ Cassie (or Catherine) married a pharmacist named Thomas Jefferson Lomax from Charlotte, North Carolina, in a double wedding at her mother's home⁴⁵ along with her cousin Julia Miller,⁴⁶ on November 23, 1905.⁴⁷ Other than the listing with his mother and sister in the 1891 Canada Census, we were unable to find out anything about Arthur Chickee's life until we uncovered his April, 1913 death registration.⁴⁸ He died of tuberculosis in the Muskoka Free Hospital while working as labourer.

³⁹Archives of Ontario; Series: MS935; Reel: 101; Archives of Ontario. *Registrations of Deaths, 1869-1938*. MS 935, Reels 1-615.

⁴⁰Archives of Ontario; Series: MS932; Reel: 81; *Ontario, Canada, Select Marriages*.

⁴¹Archives of Ontario; Series: MS932; Reel: 104; *Ontario, Canada, Select Marriages*.

⁴²Archives of Ontario; Series: MS935; Reel: 391; Archives of Ontario. *Registrations of Deaths, 1869-1938*. MS 935, Reels 1-615

⁴³Archives of Ontario; Series: MS935; Reel: 30; Archives of Ontario. *Registrations of Deaths, 1869-1938*. MS 935, Reels 1-615

⁴⁴Archives of Ontario; Series: MS935; Reel: 34; Archives of Ontario. *Registrations of Deaths, 1869-1938*. MS 935, Reels 1-615

⁴⁵*Owen Sound Times*, Jan 06, 1905-Dec 22, 1905; Births, Marriages & Deaths, pages 100 & 101

⁴⁶Julia Miller, the daughter of Thomas Henry Miller, married Charles Brown of Owen Sound.

⁴⁷Archives of Ontario; Series: MS932; Reel: 118; *Ontario, Canada, Select Marriages*.

⁴⁸Archives of Ontario; Series: MS935; Reel: 188; Archives of Ontario. *Registrations of Deaths, 1869-1938*. MS 935, Reels 1-615.

Sarah Chuckee, while attending the B.M.E. Church in Owen Sound that her uncle Thomas Henry Miller co-founded, met the twice-widowed travelling minister Wellington Alexander McClure. She was in her fifties when she finally married Rev. McClure on October 5, 1910⁴⁹ and they settled in the Woodstock area.

The only other documentation that we have found regarding Catherine's youngest daughter, Elizabeth Chuckee, who was 5 years old when listed in the 1871 Census with her mother and siblings, is the birth and death registration of her baby son George, who was born on December 23, 1882, and died on December 25, 1882.⁵⁰ Catherine Chuckee attended the delivery and Sarah Chuckee was the informant on both the birth and death records.

Once John's incarceration and eventual death in Kingston Penitentiary was clarified, we had to re-examine the lineage of his branch of the Chuckee family. As mentioned above, we still have six Chuckee children whose parentage cannot be proven, along with a few children whom we have been unsuccessful in tracking. The unfortunate dilemma that we are faced with is the inability to finalize the direct biological lineage of many of the Miller-Chuckee descendants.

Today there is an extremely large, ever-growing family who descend from both Mary Jane Chickee-Bird and her brother Thomas Wesley Chickee. Whether they derive from John Isaiah's direct branch, or his older brother William's, they still belong in the ancestral family tree of Henry and Priscilla Miller of Sullivan Township, Grey County.

As we uncovered the Miller-Chuckee family story we came across many pieces of conflicting and often distressing information, and some has been simply difficult to fathom or digest. Although it's important to evaluate and analyze the evidence in an effort to lay out the chronological life facts, we also need to remind ourselves that not everything is always what it seems on the surface. Sometimes we need to read between the lines so that we can hopefully gain some insight concerning the individual in question, and perhaps an understanding on how or why they stumbled while walking down their respective road.

⁴⁹Archives of Ontario; Series: MS932; Reel: 147; *Ontario, Canada, Select Marriages*.

⁵⁰Archives of Ontario; Series: MS935; Reel: 30; Archives of Ontario. *Registrations of Deaths, 1869-1938*. MS 935, Reels 1-615