

Families

Families worked together to build close-knit, resilient and vibrant communities

Shiren Van Cooten

James Barnswell was born in Jamaica, while his wife, Mary, was born in Puerto Rico of the Spanish West Indies, today a part of the United States. Professional photos of the family suggest that they had achieved some prominence and financial success in their community. One of their children, James Augustus Barnswell, born in Victoria in 1879, became a baseball player for the Maple Leafs, a Toronto minor league baseball club in 1898. Two of the Barnswell daughters married sons of Charles and Nancy Alexander.

Charles and Nancy Alexander and their two children arrived aboard the steamship Oregon from San Francisco on July 1, 1858. Charles headed to the gold fields while Nancy stayed in town. On his return, the family settled in the farming community of Saanich, building a profitable farming enterprise. Their family grew to 12. Charles was also a skilled carpenter. He and Nancy rallied their community to build a school and church. Charles was one of the school trustees and a lay preacher at the church. More than 400 descendants have been documented, many still live in BC.

One of these descendants is great-grandson James Douglas “Doug” Hudlin. Baseball became a passion and he umpired generations of little leaguers. Because of his fairness, judgement and empathy, he is remembered as “The Gentleman Umpire.” Doug has been honoured by several organizations: in 1998, he was inducted into the Victoria Sports Hall of Fame and in 2011 inducted into the B.C. Baseball Umpires Association Hall of Fame. He was inducted posthumously to the [Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum](#). In that same year, the City of Victoria declared June 11 as “Doug Hudlin Day.”

In 1849 in Missouri, Howard Estes agreed to be a herder on a cattle-drive across the US to California and once there he could mine for gold to earn the money for his family’s freedom. After earning the agreed amount, Howard’s “owner” decided he wanted more money, which forced Howard to be away from his family even longer. In November 1852, Howard paid \$4000, an enormous sum at that time, for emancipation for himself, his wife Hannah and their two children Syliva and Jackson. Sadly, their youngest daughter Agnes had died in 1851.



Charles and Nancy Alexander were leaders in their community, early pioneers from San Francisco who arrived on the steamship Oregon on invitation from Sir James Douglas in 1858. BCA-01068

Howard and Hannah planned to stay in Missouri; but facing ongoing racism, they decided to make the lengthy, arduous and dangerous trek back to California. It took them 6 months. Settling into life in California, Sylvia met and married Louis Stark; they had two children, Emma and then Willis. In 1860, three generations of the Estes-Stark family left California for Vancouver Island. Howard purchased one of the biggest farms in the farming community of Saanich, and Jackson farmed with his dad. Sylvia and Louis settled on Salt Spring Island. Sylvia was an avid farmer too. Some of the apple trees she tended still bear fruit. She also worked as a mid-wife. Their daughter Emma became a school teacher. Stark descendants still own the Stark family home on Stark Road, Salt Spring Island.

The Jones' and the M.R. Smith family had talent abounding within their families, leading them to prominence. John Craven Jones and William Allen Jones hailed from Raleigh, North Carolina, where their school was burnt down three times before the family decided to move to Ohio, where they could study freely at Oberlin College. The brothers brought that love of education with them when settling in BC via San Francisco. John Craven became the first teacher on Salt Spring Island, and William Allen went on to become British Columbia's first licensed dentist under the British Columbia Dental Act in 1886.