

The Family of Samuel Green

by Marian Pierre-Louis

“On the opposite corner, now Mrs. Schools’, lived Samuel Green, his wife, and two children, Robert and Catherine. They were of African descent. Very respectable people they were, the children attended the public school, and were equal to any other scholar in their ability and attainments.”

This unattributed quote from a compilation of Medfield recollections begins to describe the Greens, an African American family living in Medfield during the 1800s.

“The father was an industrious, hard-working man, much respected. For many years he was ‘first-man’ in the employ of Capt. William Peters; and few men there were who could equal him in amount of work done, any one who had the temerity to attempt to ‘cut his corners’ in the hayfield was sure to come to grief. The family was finally removed to Frairy Street, and passed the remainder of their days at the place now owned by Miss Dow.”

Samuel Green was just one of many African Americans who resided in Medfield during the 18th and 19th centuries. Born February 23, 1789 at an unknown location, he was raised in Wrentham, and bound out to Inn Keeper David Mann as his parents were too poor to raise him by themselves. Upon reaching adulthood, Green settled in Medfield.

On March 6, 1821, Sam married Rachel Coffee of Medway, the daughter of Revolutionary War Soldier Ishmael and Hannah (Gay) Coffee. Not long after, Sam and Rachel took up residence in Medfield.

The May 17, 1822 birth in Medfield of their son, Johnson (later known as Robert) is the first record that exists of the Samuel Green family in this town. A few years later on August 8, 1825, their daughter, Catherine Brown Green, was born.

Little detail is known about the lives of Sam Green and his family except for this bit of anecdotal evidence.

“Tim Harding was the foreman [*on the homestead of Capt. William Peters*] and Sam Green led off with the work. Haying was then a momentous affair. It took fully six weeks to gather in all the hay. Rising at the break of day the men would enter the field, led on by Sam Green, and work was continued till so many hours.” (*60 Years Ago*, C.E. Adams, 1838)

No doubt Sam Green was a hard working man. Despite historical stereotypes about African Americans not owning property, Sam did purchase his own home on Frairy Street in 1857. By 1864, he had paid off his mortgage and owned the property outright.

A month shy of his 86th birthday, Samuel Green died from old age on January 23, 1875 in Medfield. His house remained in the family, being passed first to his wife, Rachel, who died April 2, 1878 at age 91 from acute bronchitis. The house was then deeded to their unmarried daughter, Catherine, until her death from a fractured hip on April 24, 1884 at age 58. Their son, Robert, had died earlier at age 32 from typhoid fever on November 24, 1854. All four members of the Green family are buried in Section A-3, Lot 194. 🌿

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