

THE HOLDEN FAMILY

In compiling the history of the village of Nobleton, we must look to the men and women who have earnestly built the village we now reside in, one built out of what was once the wilderness of Upper Canada. Among the many old and numerous families who are part of our past, the family of my great-great-grandfather, Isaac Holden, played a contributing role.

Isaac Holden was born in Yorkshire, England, in 1828, being one of the twelve children of John and Jane Holden. Life was by no means easy in the England of those days, struggling through the uneasy times of the Industrial Revolution. Thus in 1832, John Holden, probably hard pressed by the way of life in his native land, emigrated from England and came to Canada, settling in the hills of the Blue Mountains, near Collingwood, Ontario. But no sooner had the family become established in their new life than tragedy struck these new Canadians, for John died shortly after arriving. Fortunately his wife Jane struggled on raising her large family and was rewarded with a long and happy life.

Their son Isaac left Collingwood to come to Nobleton in or around the year 1847. Here he married Christina Hawman, who gave birth to his nine children within the next eighteen years. They consisted of: John (1848 - 1914), George Arthur (1850 - 1934), Jane (1852 - ?), William Edward (1854 - 1912), Isaac Bertrum (1856 - 1924), Mary Elizabeth (1857 - 1897), Susannah (1859 - 1923), Wesley (1863 - 1910), and Norman Jacob (1866 - 1930). Isaac purchased a home on Lot 5, Conc. 8, in Nobleton and carried on his trade of butchering for a number of years. He continued his life in the village until his death on January 3, 1899, and was buried in Nobleton Community Cemetery beside his wife Christina who has predeceased him on October 20, 1887.

All of Isaac's family, except his second son George, moved away from their home-town as their father had done before them.

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John and Wesley took up residence in Toronto, where John drove a horse-drawn streetcar in the downtown area, while Wesley worked at a delivery business. Jane and Mary both married and left Nobleton, while their sister Susannah married Samuel Baker of Bolton, and with him made her home in Buffalo, New York. William married Fanny J. Duke, and ran a hotel in Omemee, near Peterborough, while his brother, Norman, became a wealthy and prominent business man in Montreal, Quebec. Isaac B. turned out to be the black-sheep of the family. Being his father's namesake, he apprenticed with his father to become a butcher with the intention of taking over his business. But he was restless and with the opening up of the Canadian West at that time, combined with the adventure and different life style accompanied with it, Isaac left Nobleton and went West. He frequented many locations from Seattle, Washington, north to the Peace River and the Klondike, but eventually he returned home in 1924, where he died suddenly and was buried with his parents.

George A. Holden continued on living in Nobleton. In 1875 he married Margaret MacGillivray and together they purchased a home on part of Lot 6, Conc. 9, on the main street of town. Here George built a blacksmith shop beside his home and continued his trade which he had learnt with a Mr. Heacock of the 8th Concession, King. His family grew with the birth of a son Albert in 1877 and a daughter Laura in 1878. George joined the local Orange Lodge, was a regular attendant at the Church of England, and became one of our village's prominent and renowned citizens. But unfortunately, in 1879 he lost both his wife and daughter, and was later to lose his home by fire. But with the courage and strength of his forefathers, he rebuilt his home and in November 1880 he remarried to a Nobleton resident, Jennie Fry, a daughter of Charles and Mary Anne Fry, who gave birth to five children: Willie Arthur (1880 - 1881), Margaret Viola (1883 - 1955), Charles (1885 - 1957), Mary Anne (1887 - 1892), and Myrtle (1890 - 1940).

But like all families, the George Holden family soon

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broke up as the children left home to build a new life for themselves, and death took its toll. George's eldest son, Albert, was killed in 1903 when he was fatally injured in an explosion at the Gutta-Perka Rubber Co. in Toronto where he worked. George's wife Jennie died on February 2, 1907, while his son Charlie married Elizabeth Ezard, and left home to raise a family, soon followed in 1908 by Myrtle who married George Extence, and operated a general grocery store in Bolton. But the eldest daughter, Margaret, my grandmother, who had married William Rose (1872 - 1952) in January 1909, had given up the chance to build a home on the developing Canadian Prairie, and remained at home with her widowed father. William Rose joined George in the blacksmith shop, and in the process of a few years acquired the business when George retired. It was on November 10, 1934 that Nobleton lost one of its most outstanding citizens when George Arthur Holden died, and was laid to rest beside his family in Nobleton Community Cemetery.

Of George's three surviving children, Margaret, Charlie, and Myrtle, some mention should be made. Margaret and her husband, William Rose, continued on living in Nobleton in George's house on the main street of town. William continued to operate the blacksmith shop until a few years before his death in 1952, at which time he could boast of having carried on this service for the farmers of this district for forty-five years. Of their family of three; Harold, Norman, and Kathleen, both sons are living in Nobleton, while Kathleen (Mrs. William Yeaman) is a resident of Toronto. Harold, my father, began working for King Township as the Clerk-Treasurer in 1937, and has only recently retired from that position after over thirty-seven years devotion to the job. He married Ruth Leonard of Schomberg in 1941 and had a family of two; Glenda (Mrs. Kenneth Metrick) of Toronto, and myself. Norman Rose, who carried on the family trade of blacksmith, became witness to the growing automation of transportation and farming methods in our society, and saw the inevitable decline of his

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trade. But today, the Holden-Rose blacksmith shop has been re-erected in its entirety, including the very same dirt from the floors, at Black Creek Pioneer Village in Toronto, with Norman still continuing on as its blacksmith. Even today, this once necessary function of a pioneer society, which has become an art for us now, can be seen as it originally was a century ago. Norman married Janet Hume in 1935 and has two daughters; Norma (Mrs William Cutler) of Nobleton, and Doreen (Mrs. Lorne Lipsett) of Schomberg. Kathleen Rose married William Yeaman in 1936 and together they operated a general grocery and meat store in Toronto. They also had two children; Robert and Diane (Mrs. Stacy Kairys).

Margaret's brother Charlie Holden (1885 - 1957) raised his three children, Winnifred, Albert, and Ethel, in Nobleton until his wife Elizabeth died during the influenza epidemic in 1918. He later remarried to Maude Cooper, and with his family moved to Toronto where he operated a cartage business. His daughter Winnifred married Arthur Burnistun and had no family, while her sister Ethel married Thomas Rowecliff and had a family of four; Norma, Donna, Charles, and Betty, and later remarried to Gordon Wootten and had a son Shawn. Albert Holden, who carried on his father's cartage business, married Jean Petrie and had three children; Brian, Charles, and Susan.

Myrtle Holden(1890 - 1940) and her husband George Extence, with their two daughters Margaret (Mrs. Richard Marshall), and Helen (Mrs. Edwin Mitchell), moved to Toronto to keep store after their original business in Bolton was destroyed by fire.

Now after more than one hundred and twenty-five years since Isaac Holden arrived in Nobleton, there is no one within the area who bears the Holden name. But Isaac and all the early settlers like him are still remembered by us today with pride as being the early pioneers who laid the foundations of our village of Nobleton.

by Paul H. Rose
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