

## **Holton Family History Part 1 – The Freedom Seekers**

For this month's family history, we will be highlighting the Holton Family, beginning with John Holton. John, who is sometimes referred to as Randolph, married Susan Scott who, according to the Museum's records, was born on April 15, 1832 to a man with the last name Scott and a woman with the first name Lydia. Our records also indicate that Susan had a sister named Martha, who died in 1869, and a half sister named Sarah "who was the mother of Mrs. Saunders." The Museum's records include a note stating that "Mrs. Susan Scott Holton with her living children were emancipated by their owner, Mary Kirk, at Cincinnati, Ohio, by a document witnessed by John Joliffe and Levi Coffin." Coffin is often referred to as the "President of the Underground Railroad." The records also say that Mary Kirk provided the Holton family with funds sufficient to purchase a plot of ground with shelter.

Found in the Museum's collection is a "Synopsis of the Emancipation of Susan Holton and Children" which says "Mary Kirk, widow of Richard Kirk, of Kentucky on the thirteenth day of October in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred fifty eight had personally appeared before the Honorable George H. Hilton sole Judge of the Hamilton County Probate Court in Cincinnati in the State of Ohio and brought with her into open court Susan Holton and John M. Scott Holton, (son), and Laura Dorcas Holton (daughter), (the father was Randolph Holton, a slave on the plantation neighboring the Kirk's; he later escaped and joined his family in Amherstburg.) The said Mary Kirk stated in open court that she brought said persons from the State of Kentucky into the State of Ohio for the purpose of emancipating them and the Court now find and adjudge that the said Susan Holton and John M. Scott Holton and Laura Dorcas Holton are free persons and the said Mary Kirk also produced to the Court her deed of Emancipation to the said above named persons which deed the Court having examined carefully

the same find and adjudge is well executed and ordered the same to be recorded. The affidavit of Mary Kirk states she swears that she brought Susan Holton and her children into the State of Ohio from Kentucky.”

According to a death notice for Susan, printed on April 9, 1920 in the *Amherstburg Echo*, Susan passed away on Saturday March 27<sup>th</sup>, 1920 at the age of 87. Unfortunately, we were not able to find an obituary for Susan, but her death record lists her as being born in Lexington, Kentucky, widowed, and a housekeeper. The informant was her daughter Laura Holton Adams.

Susan and John Holton had at least five children: John Mercedo Scott Holton (b. December 4, 1855), William Fenton Holton (b. November 20, 1856), Laura Dorcas Holton (b. July 26, 1857), Luke B. Holton (born November 26, 1860 and died July 17, 1861), and James Holton (born July 16, 1862). The 1871 Census shows John and Susan Holton living in Anderdon with four of their children: John, Laura, James and William. Both John and John Jr. are listed as farmers and everyone but James and William (who were born in Ontario) are listed as being born in the United States. The 1881 Census does not list John who likely passed away at this point but lists Susan and her children including John and his wife Mary, Laura, William, and James. The 1891 Census shares an extra detail that John Jr. was working as a “Cook on Vessel.” John’s brother James is listed under a separate household in 1891 and he is shown as living with his wife Annie and their son Forrest.

**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 2.**