

Holton Family History Part 2 – The Disappearance

In 1901, the Census lists John Jr. as still living with his mother Susan and his daughter May who is from his first marriage. At this point, John's wife Mary is not listed, meaning that she likely passed away before the Census was taken. The 1901 Census also lists John as a farm labourer. The Museum's family history binder for the Holton family states that John worked for 20 years for "The Borrowmans." John married twice. His first marriage was to Mary Bissell and the couple had a daughter named May. As mentioned, the 1901 Census lists John living with his daughter May, but it also records May's birthday as November 28, 1887. Further research led us to a marriage record for May Irene Holton, daughter of John Holton and Mary Bissell, to a man named Guy Fortson, the son of Thomas Fortson and Micea Hayden. The couple married on May 31, 1911 in Windsor. This record lists Guy's father as a teacher, while May's father was a farmer. It is likely that May married a second time because her father John's obituary lists May as Mrs. Ward, of Cleveland.

As mentioned, John married more than once. His second marriage was to Mary (Jones) Banks who was previously married to Thomas William Banks, the son of Irvine S. and Hester Anne Banks. Mary's parents are also listed as Samuel D. and Charlotte Jones. Mary married her first husband on January 8, 1883 in Amherstburg and they had several children. Before we move forward to discuss the union of John Holton and Mary Jones Banks, we will share some details about Mary's children from her first marriage. Mary and Thomas had several children including Carl, Lulu, Anna, Charles, Thomas, Arthur, Clarence, and William. Carl married Phebe Chavis, the daughter of Thomas Chavis and Malinda Harris on February 7, 1927 in Windsor, while Lulu married Robert Gaskins and Anna married Lionel Conway, son of George Conway and Pearl Brooks, on June 21, 1924 in Detroit. Charles Banks was born on October 28, 1883 in Colchester,

while Thomas Ulysus Banks was born on July 29, 1885 in Colchester. Next is Arthur Banks who was born circa 1887 and passed away on April 5, 1908 in Philadelphia. At the time he was 21 years old, a labourer, and single. Arthur's brother Clarence Jones Banks was born on December 9, 1890 in Colchester, while William Banks was born on September 2, 1892 in Virginia and passed away on January 29, 1924 in Amherstburg. At the time he was single, and the informant was William's brother Carl.

Mary Jones Banks married John Holton on February 5, 1919 in Amherstburg. At the time, John was 62 and Mary was 58. Their marriage record also reveals the last name of Mary's mother: Abner.

On December 8, 1922, the *Amherstburg Echo* reported an interesting story that said "A good deal of excitement was caused in town Monday afternoon by the disappearance of John Holton, Perry (Ferry?) street, Mr. Holton has not been well for a couple of weeks and was gone some little time before his wife noticed it. Search parties were at once organized and when word came that he was last seen in the vicinity of the quarry, the whole countryside to the Canard and even as far as Essex was combed, but without success. It is feared that in his state of health, the rain and cold weather would chill him, and that creeping into the shelter he perished. Word has been sent throughout the district, and the searching will be kept up until he is located. Wednesday forenoon he surprised his family by coming in from Windsor on the street car, but can give no connected account of his wanderings."

It was just a few years later in 1925, on February 20th, that the *Essex Free Press* reported John's passing. His obituary shares "John Holton, died Monday of last week at London. His remains were brought to Amherstburg for interment. Mr. Holton was a native of Kentucky but moved to Amherstburg when a child. He was twice married first to Mary Bissell who bore him

one daughter, now Mrs. Ward, of Cleveland. His second wife, who survives him, was the widow of the late Thomas Banks. He is also survived by his sister, Mrs. W.H. Adams, of Amherstburg, and a brother, James, of Cleveland. Mr. Holton spent his whole life in and around Amherstburg.”

Several years later, on August 6, 1937, the *Amherstburg Echo* shared news of the passing of John’s wife, Mary. Her death announcement says that she passed on July 31, 1937 at the age of 77, but her obituary shares more details of her life. The article, titled “Dies In Detroit,” says “A resident of Amherstburg for the past 30 years, Mrs. Mary L. Holton died at the home of her daughter, Mrs. Gaskins, Detroit, Saturday evening following a short illness. Mrs. Holton was born in Anderdon Township 77 years ago, and was the daughter of the late Samuel Jones. She was twice married, her first husband being Mr. Thomas Banks of Colchester South, and her second husband being Mr. John Holton of Amherstburg who predeceased her seven years ago. Surviving are two daughters, (Lula) Mrs. Robert Gaskins of Detroit; Anna, Mrs. Lionel Conway, of Amherstburg, one son Carl, also of Amherstburg. Funeral services were conducted Wednesday afternoon at 1 o’clock, from the first Baptist Church and interment was made in Rose Hill Cemetery. Mrs. Holton was a member of the first Baptist church and the ladies’ Guild for many years.”

The next child of John Holton and Susan Scott is William Fenton Holton. His date of birth is November 20, 1856. The only other detail that could be found is from the 1891 Census that lists William as a “Cook on Vessel.”

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 3.