

The Hilton Family

of Hilton's Point Road, Kawartha Lakes



Like many communities, Kawartha Lakes has roads and streets named after significant landmarks, influential individuals, and families that shaped the region. These names serve as a window into the past, offering a glimpse of what once was and leaving us to wonder about their historical significance.

On the east side of Head Lake, there is a road named after one of the first pioneering families that occupied that area called Hilton's Point Road, named after the Hilton Family.

John and Elizabeth (nee Greenwood) Hilton came from families who worked in the dangerous and unhealthy cotton mills near Manchester, England. Seeking a better life for themselves and their only child, 6-year-old David, in 1857 John then 28, and Elizabeth, 32, emigrated through New York to Canada in 1857.

The Hilton family crossed Lake Ontario, landed in Port Hope, and spent a year or two in Cavan Township. By 1861 the family of three was living in a one-room log house on land in Laxton, located at the east side of Head Lake on the edge of the Canadian shield where John cleared trees, removed rocks, and began farming.

After fulfilling the government's requirements of clearing a portion of the lands and paying \$135, the 148-acre Hilton Family farm on Concession 7 in the Township of Laxton was officially registered in David Hilton's name on March 20, 1874.

The Crown Grant was sealed by 'Queen Victoria, by the Grace of God, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, Queen, Defender of the Faith'. Intriguingly, a later deed dated April 23, 1881, saw David transfer the property to his father, John, in exchange for \$500. The exact reason why the original grant was made to the son and the lands were later transferred to the father remains a mystery.

The barn was completed in 1871 and the brick house was built in 1882, both of which still stand marking the original homestead of the Hilton family.

John Hilton died in 1892, at the age of 63. Shortly after John Hilton's death in 1891 Sam Hughes wrote in the Victoria Warder newspaper that John Hilton was a well-respected farmer whose last act before he died was to go into town by horse and buggy to vote for Sir John A. Macdonald in the general election of 1891.



Hilton Family Home, c. 1903.

From left to right: Jane Hilton, John Hilton (baby), Mary Ann Montgomery (Jane's sister), David Hilton.

John Hilton's Last Will and Testament, dated October 10, 1891, reflects the strong bond between father, mother, and son. In it, John bequeathed his entire estate to his son David, with the condition that David provides his wife (David's mother), Elizabeth, with a comfortable home.

Sadly, Elizabeth at the age of 67 passed away in 1892. Both John and Elizabeth found their final resting place in the cemetery at Hilton's Point Road and Highway 35, just north of Norland.

Meanwhile, David's personal life had taken a positive turn in 1889 when he married Margaret Jane Bailey, daughter of James Bailey and Margaret Jamieson. However, the couple's happiness was short-lived, as Margaret succumbed to dropsy in 1898.



Home in Coboconk, c.1908

From left to right: Jane Hilton, Archibald Hilton, Mary Ann Montgomery (Jane's sister), John Hilton and David Hilton.

Undeterred by adversity, David found love once again. On November 21, 1900, at the age of 48 David married 31-year-old Jane 'Jennie' Prudence Montgomery, the youngest daughter of John Montgomery, and Catherine Fee of Janetville, in Manvers Township south of Lindsay. The Montgomery family had migrated from the Protestant (Methodist) north of Ireland in the late 1840s to escape the potato famine that devastated much of Ireland.

Together, David and Jane cultivated their Head Lake home and shortly thereafter in 1902 and 1903 celebrated the arrival of their first two children, John (known as 'Jack') and Archie. It was around that time that Jane's older 'spinster' sister Mary Ann Montgomery became a permanent part of the family unit. Before then Mary Ann had looked after her parents who had recently died. Living in that time, before any "social safety net", family members looked after their own. David and Jane took in Mary Ann, who lived as a valued part of the Hilton family for 34 years until she died in 1937.

In 1907, David Hilton decided to sell the Head Lake farm to neighboring farmer Alfred Newton Winterburn for \$2,700. The Winterburn family took over the land, continuing its farming legacy until 1940 when it changed hands again, becoming the property of the Goslin family. The Hilton family relocated to 43 Water Street, Coboconk, in 1908, settling in a house nestled by the Gull River not far from the local school where Jack and Archie began their elementary school education. During their five-year stay in Coboconk, David secured employment at the local sawmill, which involved hard physical labour, supporting his family, and embracing new opportunities.

A moment of joy arrived on July 1, 1910, as David and Jane welcomed a set of twin boys, Wesley ('Wes') and Alwilda Theodore ('Ted') further expanding their loving family.

After the twins turned three, and David Hilton's heart condition was diagnosed precluding him from carrying on the heavy work at the sawmill, the Hiltons made another move, this time to 56 Angeline Street South, Lindsay, directly across the street from the current Leslie Frost school. The purchase price of their new residence, accompanied by a 4-acre lot, was recorded as \$1,500 in the deed. David transitioned into the less risky role of a groundskeeper for a local golf course.

In March of 1922, as Jack was almost 20 years old and Archie was soon to celebrate his 19th birthday David thought that the boys could handle the hard physical labour involved in farming, something his heart condition prevented him from doing. The Hilton family, then consisting of David, his wife, his sister-in-law, and his four boys, relocated once more this time to a farm, east of Lindsay, situated on the Downeyville Road, Lot 21, Concession 10, Ops Township. David and his family devoted the next ten years of David's life to farming on this land until his passing on July 16, 1932, at the age of 80. David was buried in Lindsay Riverside Cemetery.

<p style="text-align: center;">At Rest</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">In Ops Township, on Saturday, July 16th., 1932</p> <p style="text-align: center;">David Hilton</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Aged 80 Years</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">The Funeral</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">Will be held from the family residence, Lot 21, Con. 10, Ops, on Monday, July 18th., at 3 p.m. Service at 2.30 p.m. Interment at Riverside Cemetery.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Friends and acquaintances will please accept this intimation.</p>
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Copy of David Hilton's Funeral Notice, c. 1932

Life on the farm during the Great Depression of the 1930s was not easy for the Hilton family. Jack and Wes found some employment related to the construction of Highway 35. By 1935 Ted and Jack had married local girls and had left the farm. Jack immersed himself in his work with the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR), while Ted found employment in Toronto and Oshawa, first as a milkman and later as a service station operator. In 1936 Wes was living in Lindsay, working for Purity Bakery and later Trent Valley Bakery delivering bread throughout Haliburton County to camps and resorts. By 1937, Archie Hilton, the last remaining Hilton brother living on the family farm in Ops Township, left for Toronto in search of employment which he found first at the Don Valley Brickyard and later at the CPR as a freight car checker. Wes remained in Lindsay and looked after his mother Jane.

The Hilton family farm in Ops Township was leased to a tenant for a few years and was eventually sold in 1939. In 1940 Wes married Brenda Hutchinson. In addition to his bread truck route, Wes helped out at the Hutchinson family farm located on Post Road, east of Lindsay. Also in 1940, Jane Hilton moved to Toronto to live with her son Archie. After Archie's marriage in 1942, Jane lived in Toronto with Archie and his wife Agnes. Sadly, just as the Second World War was ending and a few month's before Archie's first child was born, Jane passed away at the age of 76 and was laid to rest in the Riverside Cemetery in Lindsay alongside her husband and near her sister Mary Ann. The Riverside Cemetery is also the last resting place of David and Jane's sons Jack and Wes Hilton.

John David Hilton, a great-grandson of John and Elizabeth Hilton, of Hilton's Point Road, and a grandson of David and Jane Hilton, currently lives a few blocks away from the Lindsay Fairgrounds in the City of Kawartha Lakes.

Submitted by the Hilton Family