



The John Henry Laity family in 1888. This portrait, taken in New Westminster by the Thompson & Bovill Studios, depicts a future reeve of Maple Ridge, his wife, the former Mary Jane Pope, and their young children Mabel and Algernon. By this time the devoted couple had already lost a daughter Evelyn and son Thomas Henry to childhood sicknesses. They would raise 4 more children: Lambert, Raymond, Evelyn, and Thomas Henry. Mabel died in 1900 after falling off a horse. The second Thomas Henry (shown opposite) enlisted in the First World War and went overseas to fight in the trenches of France but instead died of pneumonia.

## The John Henry Laity Family

*From "Ramblings from Memory" by Dorothy Irene (Mrs. Raymond) Laity*

After about five years away from home, [John Henry Laity] began to think of his old sweetheart that he had left in the old land. He decided to send her a valentine. The mails were slow in those days, but in due course the valentine was returned to him, "Address Unknown." This really shook John Henry! He had never sent so much as a scratch of the pen to the girl from the time he had sailed away. He at once got busy and wrote to his mother's cousin to try and trace Mary Jane Pope. In time an answer came back to say the girl was still unwed, and staying with relatives in Scotland. John Henry immediately wrote her a proposal of marriage and enclosed money for her ticket (I believe it was \$500), as well as detailed instructions

**Opposite**  
**Page taken from the family bible:**  
**Algernon, Raymond, Evelyn,**  
**and Thomas Henry Laity.**



**The Methodist Church.**

for arriving in Denver. The girl accepted and sailed for America. John Henry calculated the time he must leave the mines in order to be in Denver a couple of days before the train came in from New York. After all, there were wedding arrangements to be made, license to get, lodging and clothes to think of, etc. Well, the train came in a day or two earlier than expected, and with no one to meet her, and being a stranger in a wild and new land, the girl was preparing to leave as soon as the train made its return journey, when John Henry finally found her. They were married in Denver, USA, on November 2nd, 1878.

John Henry was an only son, and it wasn't long before his parents, Thomas and Honor Laity, joined him in the USA. Working in the mines was all very well when you were single, but hardly the place you wanted to bring up your family. Shootings were almost a daily occurrence and one never knew when one's own turn would come; also, they wanted to be under the British flag. There was talk of the new country on the coast of Western Canada, so leaving their wives behind them, John Henry Laity and Mr. (William) Hampton made the long journey to see if this might be a better place to make a home for their families. After checking land in New Westminster, Ladner and the west

coast of Vancouver Island, where land could be had for \$1 per acre, they came by boat to Maple Ridge and knew this was what they were seeking. Mr. Laity purchased 160 acres of land belonging to John Hammond in 1879. There had been a foundation for a house laid, but John Hammond had been disappointed in love, so sold this property. This land was not cleared and only a trail led through the woods from the Fraser River to reach it. There were first growth Douglas firs, cedars and hemlock that had to be cleared. Later, when roads were made, the one from the Fraser north to the Laity farm was called Laity Road. In the 1930's it was changed to 3rd Avenue, then in 1970 it was changed to Laity Street.

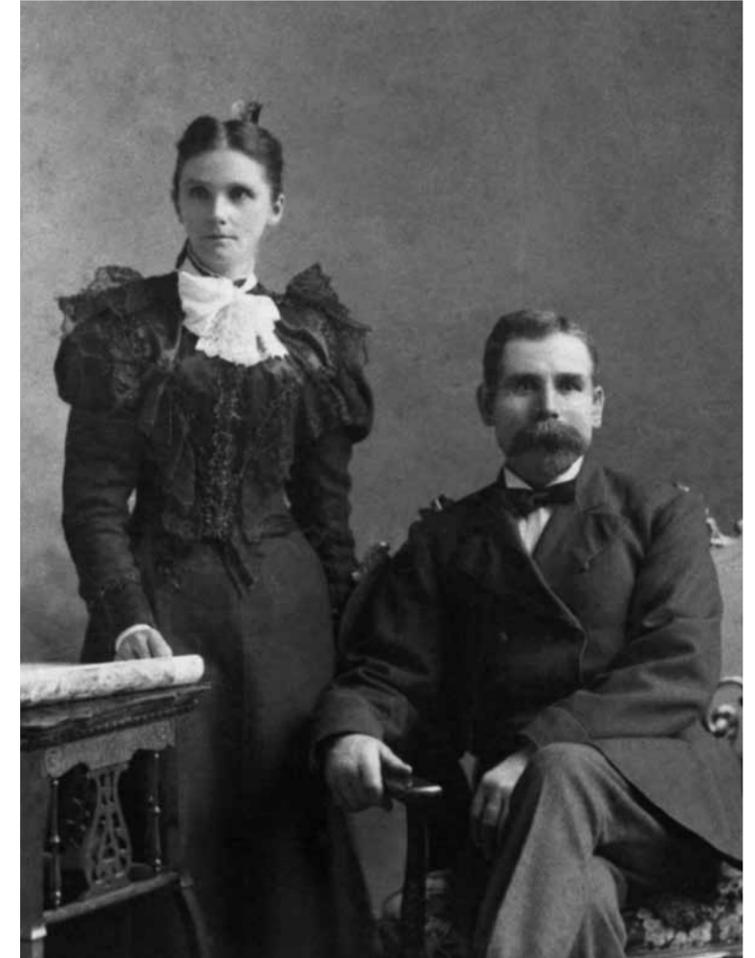
Mr. Laity was a man of vision, a keen reader and shrewd businessman. He was one of the names on the original charter of the Maple Ridge Board of Trade dated April 30th, 1910. He took an active part in community affairs. He was Justice of the Peace for years, and also Reeve of Maple Ridge Municipality in 1892 and 1893 and in 1908 and 1909.

## The Hampton Family

*By Margaret Ann Ward  
née Hampton*

The day came when Billy and John felt they wanted to move again. They had heard of a gold rush in Nevada. Then John Laity's parents heard from her friends, Mr. and Mrs. Gilbert of Penzance, about their son, T.H. Gilbert, who had gone as a missionary to British Columbia, Canada. He was stationed at an Anglican Church at Derby, a district south of Langley on the south side of the Fraser River. He told them about the good fertile land in that part of the country. This sounded good to John and Billy, and they decided to investigate. They were tired of the mining, longtime miners were bothered with a cough caused by too much dust getting into their lungs, so they thought it was wise to try farming where they would be in fresh air. They would go to Denver, by the narrow gauge railway from Silver Plume, to arrange for this trip and to find out the cost. Since they were going to buy land, Billy found it necessary to sell his precious bass horn.

Billy and John boarded one of the steamboats and after many calls along the way they arrived at Nelson's landing in the section known as Maple Ridge. This was half way between Port Hammond and Port Haney on the north side of the Fraser. There was a long steep hill to walk up since there had been a slide that took away a large portion of the bank on one side. On the west side there was a bluff on which a pioneer, Mr. Nelson and his wife, a Kanaka, a native from the South Seas, had their home. The short length of road leading to the River Road is now Fir Street. On the east side of the slide hill there was a boarding house owned by a former Sapper named McKenney and his wife. This is where Billy and John found lodging.



**Mr. and Mrs. William Hampton.**

Sappers were Royal Engineers from the British Isles headed by Colonel Moody, who came to survey the land and to plan and build bridges and roadways. They were given a portion of land adjoining New Westminster city on the north side of the Fraser, for their homes, which was named Sapperton. When they were no longer needed, most of them preferred to stay in this lovely country, while others went back to their homeland.

Billy and John were directed to the Lillooet where the lovely, clear Lillooet flowed, now named the Alouette. The farmers in that part were bothered with this river flooding the land, so they knew it would not be wise to locate there. Next, they went east of Port Haney to Thorne Mountain but found



The Hampton farm, 2005.

the soil too sandy. Finally they were able to buy land from John Hammond.

There were a great many pioneers already settled in Maple Ridge, and each had a section of land along the Fraser River. Starting from the west, John and William Hammond owned the Hammond part, then McIver, Irving, Nelson, Hassan and Carr. Thomas Haney owned the Haney section. Billy's section of one hundred and sixty acres was to the west of John Laity's section. To the west of the Hampton section was a pioneer called Keary. To the east of the Laity's section was property owned by a pioneer named Trembath who lived there many years.

At first they would obtain only the necessary things for living in their temporary home. There were a

few stores, one down the hill in Haney, owned by John Carr, and one by George Hassan, who also had the Post Office on his property.

Eventually they moved into their homes. Later it was found that the Hampton house was partly on the Laity property, so it had to be moved farther west. Near this there were old crab apple trees, and grouse would roost in them at night. These game birds could be shot and were one supply of meat. Another was salmon, as there was an abundance of these in the Lillooet and the Fraser. At the time of the salmon runs, they were packed by the thousands from shore to shore. These could be bought from Indian fishermen for about ten or fifteen cents apiece.

Paul Hayes      Kim Hunter      Peter Hayes

## The Hayes Team

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