

The Hacker Family in PEI

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Etymology

The name Hacker has an interesting origin. It can be German (Häcker), Dutch, and Jewish (Ashkenazic). It can be an occupational name for a butcher, possibly also for a woodcutter, from an ancient derivative of Middle High German *hacken*, Dutch *hakken* 'to hack', 'to chop'. The Jewish surname may be from Yiddish *heker* 'butcher', *holtsheker* 'woodcutter' (German *Holz hacker*), or *valdheker* 'lumberjack', or from German *Hacker* 'woodchopper'. English (chiefly Somerset): from a derivative of Middle English *hacken* 'to hack', hence an occupational name for a woodcutter or, perhaps, a maker of hacks (*hakkes*), a word used in Middle English to denote a variety of agricultural tools such as mattocks and hoes.

Some sources indicate the origin of the name traces back to Anglo-Saxon times, prior to the Norman invasion of England in 1066.

Walter Haccar

Walter is our earliest confirmed ancestor. He was born in Marhamchurch, Cornwall, in 1665 to parents Walter Haccar and Elizabeth Juell. On April 17, 1708 he married Alice Jewel, who was born in 1688 in Holsworth, Devon. We don't know much about either other than they had three children, Thomas, who was baptised on February 2, 1708 (2 months before his parents' marriage), a daughter Grace, who was born on January 9, 1711 and died on January 17, 1794 and a son, Walter, who was born on the May 9, 1716. Walter senior died on May 17, 1748 and his wife, Alice, followed 10 years later, dying on June 22, 1758.

Marhamchurch is a village and a parish in Cornwall. The village stands near the Bude Canal, 2.8 kilometres (1.7 miles) from the coast and 3.2 kilometers (1.9 miles) South Southwest of Stratton. In the Domesday Book, compiled in 1086, it was known as Maromeerch. Today the parish extends to the coast and comprises 2716 acres (1099 hectares) with a population of 484.



Thomas Hacker

Thomas married Elizabeth Stacy on January 4, 1733. They had five children: Thomas (1733-1825); Elizabeth (1735-1809); Mary (1737-1737); Walter (1741-1763); and John (1742- ?). Elizabeth died in or before 1748. This is the Thomas whom my grandmother, Edith, probably always referred to as “Yeoman Thomas Hacker”. Thomas was indeed a Yeoman, one of a class of lesser freeholders, below the gentry, who cultivated their own land and was one of the earlier class of commoners given political rights in England.

Following Elizabeth’s death, Thomas married Honor Brock, on May 26, 1749, in Jacobstow, Cornwall. They had four children: William (1749-1832); Richard (1751-1832); Mary (1753-); and Alice (1755-1763). Thomas died in April 1790 in Poundstock, Cornwall, having lived a long life of 82 years. Honor predeceased him, having died in November 1761.

William

To say that the Hacker history is somewhat convoluted might be an understatement. Not only were there a number of second marriages, but names kept repeating. And in the case of William, he had two sons named Henry; one from his first marriage and one from his second. So, we have half-brothers with the same name. When tracing the immigration of the Hackers to Prince Edward Island this becomes somewhat of a conundrum as immigration records of the time tended only to list the head of the household and the number of family members travelling with him or her. Even after the Hacker’s arrived in PEI, census records provide little by way of details.

Nevertheless, after careful review, and some re-examination, I have concluded that William, the son of Thomas and Honor Brock is our direct Hacker ancestor. William was born in Poundstock on October 15, 1749. He married Jane Hobbs in Poundstock, Cornwall, England, on August 25, 1773, when he was 23 years old. Jane was the daughter of John Hobbs and Hannah Wallis.

Together they had 14 children: Thomas (1773-1851); Honor (1777-1849); Jane (1778-1789); John (1780-?); Hannah (1782-1782); William (1785(?)- 1846); Henry (1787-1851); Jane (1789-1867); Anne (1790-1880); Edward (1792-1857); James (1794-?); Mary (1796-1857); and Martha (1798-?). His wife, Jane, died at the age of 59 in Poundstock on June 11, 1811.

On December 18, 1818, at in the parish church of St. David, Exeter in Devon, 69-year-old William married 22-year-old Fanny Uglow, also known by her parents last name Stacey. Fanny was born to parents Thomas Stacey and Susanna Uglow prior to their marriage. As was the custom then, Fanny was raised by her mother's parents and thus her last name remained that of her mother.

William and Fanny had a son, Henry, born February 5, 1824, in Poundstock. Henry had three sisters: Isabella (1819-1859); Hannah (1827-); and Elizabeth (1828-1828).

Fanny died in May 1829 at the age of 33, perhaps as a result of complications following Elizabeth's birth and death the previous year. William died at the age of 82 in North Tamberton, Cornwall, England

There is a paucity of immigration records prior to the mid-1800's, but from searching the Prince Edward Island archives as well as looking at ancestry records, the following can be pieced together, but first we need to take a historical side to trip to explain how Prince Edward Island was treated after becoming a British possession.

Prince Edward Island

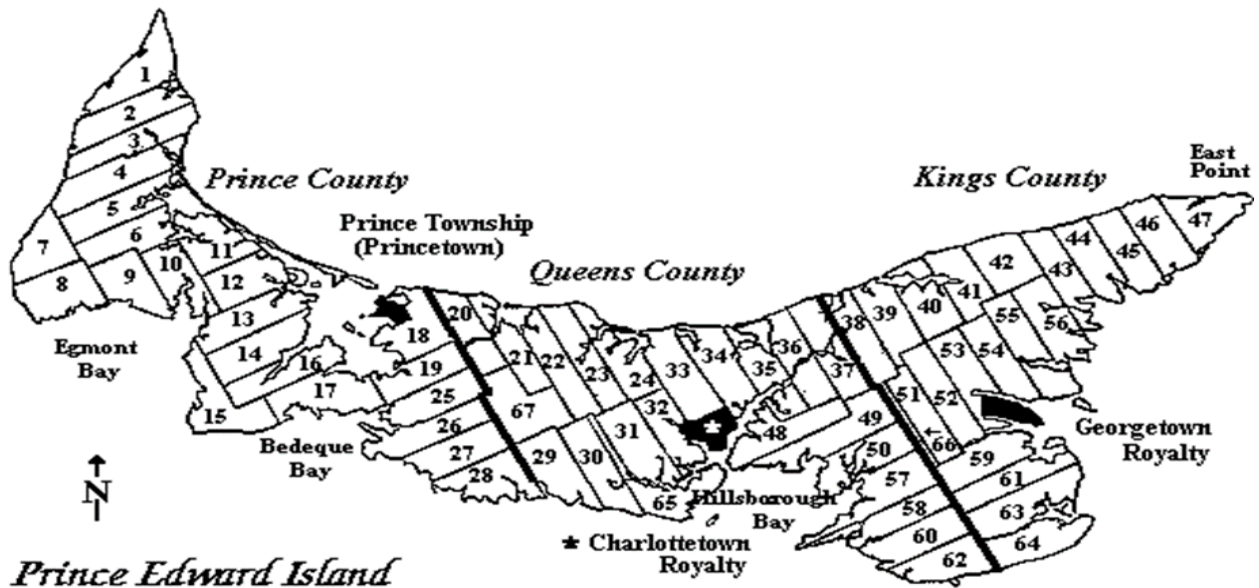
Prince Edward Island (PEI) became a British possession after the fall of the French fortress of Louisburg on Cape Breton Island in 1758. Before then the island was known as Isle St. Jean and was a French possession. France did little to settle the island, using it primarily as place to raise cattle and produce for Louisburg. As the British took Nova Scotia and other French possessions in Canada, Acadians fled to the island, eventually raising its population from less than 300 to over 4,000. When the British took possession of the island, they

renamed it Prince Edward Island and deported a large number of the Acadians to France.

In 1763, the Treaty of Paris resulted in the formal transfer of PEI to Britain from France. In 1767, in order to encourage settlement of the Island, a system of land ownership was established in which the island was divided into 67 lots of about 20,000 acres (81 km² or about 8,094 hectares) each, with settlers living on parcels of this land rented out by the owners. Ownership of the lots was determined by a lottery held in London, the winners of which were mostly political, business and military figures with connections to those in the British government. The tenant farmers were supposed to pay rent to the absentee landlords in Britain. In 1769, under pressure from the proprietors who worried that a Nova Scotia legislature would force them to give up their property rights, the British government granted PEI autonomy.

Many of the original tenant farmers came from Cornwall and Scotland. The landlords remained in Britain. As is often the case where there are absentee landlords rent was never paid, or it was not paid in the amounts expected and the system was eventually rationalized to allow the farmers to own the land directly.

The Hacker family in Prince Edward Island



In 1832, according to immigration records, some of the Hackers emigrated from Cornwall to PEI by way of Québec City. From death records, it appears the immigrants included William and Jane Hobbs's son, Thomas (1773-1851), along with his wife, Mary Isabella Leach (1781-1858) and their children; Elizabeth Veal (1802-1858); Jane (1805-1893); William (1807-1886); Isabella (1811-1907); Mary Ann (1813-1898); Martha (1817-1890); Grace (1819-1911); and John (1822-1852).

Thomas' young half-brother, Henry, who was born to William and Fanny, William's second wife, also accompanied Thomas' family to PEI. At the time of the immigration, Henry would have been 10 or 11 years of age.

William

From archival records, it is certain that Thomas' son William (1807-1886) settled in Prince Edward Island on Lot 19. He married Jane Milman on December 17, 1839. Jane was the daughter of John Milman and Elizabeth Madge. Jane was born in 1814 and was baptised on February 6, 1815 in Paignton, Devon, England. The Milman's had emigrated earlier to PEI. By all accounts William and Jane made a good life in PEI and it appears he was well respected and successful. According to the *Colonial Herald* of June 26, 1841 he was one of the founders of the Temperance Movement in PEI. The *Royal Gazette* of June 24, 1843 indicates he was appointed County Constable. They had five children: Annabella (1841-1910); Thomas S. (1844-1909); Emmeline (1844-); Elizabeth Major (1847-1941); and William Saunders (1850 -).

William died January 25, 1886 at the age of 79 and is buried in St. John's Anglican cemetery, Ellerslie, PEI.

Hacker House

According to Canada's Historic Places, the one and a half-storey vernacular house "...was constructed circa 1850 possibly by, or for, Loyalist James Waugh. By 1858, blacksmith Edward Henry (1814-1892) and his wife Grace Hacker moved to Wilmot Valley and settled at this property. In 1861, Grace (Hacker) Henry and her husband passed the house on to her brother, William Hacker. Hacker came to PEI in 1831 with his parents Thomas and Isabella Hacker of Devonshire, England. He farmed and raised his family here with his wife, Jane Hacker.



*Hacker House, 75 Blue Shank Road, Wilmot Valley,
Prince Edward Island
Photo: Canada's Historic Places*

Their son, William S. Hacker joined in the farming operation and in 1886, an addition was built onto the house. Due to the success of the 200-acre farm, and growing family, a larger house was needed. The addition was designed by prominent PEI architect, William Critchlow Harris (1854-1913). Harris added a High Victorian, Queen Anne style addition onto the west elevation of the plain vernacular house to make an elegant composite, or double house. The Queen Anne style addition was typically an urban design, which makes this composite house a standout in Island architecture.

William S. Hacker continued to own the house with his wife Ella and their three children until his death in 1903. In 1903, Frederick and Bertha Simmons purchased the Hacker farm where they raised a large family, farmed and experimented with silver black fox ranching. Frederick Simmons' son, Roy carried on the farm and rented the addition as apartments. Roy Simmons continued to farm with his son, Elmer Simmons until 1978. More recently, the composite house has been operated as the Blue Shank Inn, offering elegant Victorian rooms for accommodations and dining.”

Thomas

William’s son Thomas also farmed in PEI and eventually had his own parcel of land on Lot 18, which was just west of Summerside. Thomas married Sarah E. McMillan. Thomas died in 1909 and is buried in the People’s Protestant Cemetery in Summerside.

As to the other members of William’s extended family, such as grandchildren, it is hard to determine. The first census in PEI was only held in 1841 and only counted about 40 percent of the Island’s population, according the

staff at the PEI archives. The 1841 census is not overly helpful, even for the families included as it listed only the name of the head of the household and then the other members in terms of numbers of males and females within certain age brackets, such as the number of individuals of each sex under 18, between 18 and 65 and over 65. The next census wasn't until 1861, which was similar in lack of definition. It wasn't until the 1881 census that the names and ages of all household members was listed. By then Henry Hacker had married and left the Island, so there are no details of his life in PEI, so far as I have been able to determine.

Henry

Henry was born in 1825 in Poundstock, Cornwall. He appears to be the only son of William Hacker and Fanny Uglow. Henry had three sisters: Isabella (1819-1859); Hannah (1827-); and Elizabeth (1828-1828). As previously noted, it appears he came to PEI in 1831, when he was about six years of age, with his half-brother Thomas and his family, prior to his father's death in 1832. Henry isn't mentioned further in any of the records I have found regarding the Hacker's in PEI, although it can be speculated that when he grew older, he probably apprenticed in one of the numerous shipyards that were in PEI in the 19th century as he became a successful shipwright in his own right.

On January 30, 1850 25-year-old Henry married Sarah Ann Osborne, 10 years his junior. Sarah was the daughter of William Osborne and the late Sophia Ann Osborne. Sarah's mother had committed suicide in early 1849 by "slitting (sic) throat with a razor", according to the inquest into her death. Both William and Sarah testified at the inquest on May 24, 1849. Sarah's father was a tailor and they lived in New London, Queen's County, PEI. Sarah may also have had a sister, Sophia.

It appears that Henry and Sarah left PEI shortly after their marriage, initially moving to the United States and then to Port Hope, Ontario, where we find them in 1861.