

THE FACES OF OUR MOUNTAIN HERITAGE

By Robert Williamson



Photo courtesy William Jerome

ALBERT LILLIAN CHARLES IRA MAUD GEORGE FLORENCE
1863 -1941, 1871- x, 1865 - x, 1832-1910, 1872-1930, 1861-1924, 1875 - x

Last month I described how the Rymals, one of the Hamilton Mountain's leading pioneer families, came to occupy 800 acres of prime Crown farmland along Upper Paradise Road. Our focus was the "footprint" left behind by these American Revolution refugees including two heritage homes; one, a well-maintained Gothic Revival style farmhouse built by 3rd generation Ira Rymal ca. 1860. Located in the Falkirk neighbourhood behind St. Thomas More Secondary School it overlooks today's Wm. Schwenger Park.

With the help of present owner, Amanda Robert, and William Jerome, a 7th generation Rymal descendent, we now have a rare family portrait showing the faces of some of Ira Rymal's children who grew up in the home built by Ira and his wife, Mary Ann Smith of Ancaster. They were married in 1860 and had eleven children before she died in 1881 at the age of 41. The family portrait, shows only six siblings with Ira seated in the middle. John (1869) and Annie Laura (1879) died in infancy, while two other adult children, Clara (1869-?), and Joseph (1876-1957), were living elsewhere. The youngest child, fifteen-year-old Ira Roy (1880-1895), died in an accident. The picture was probably taken shortly thereafter in Leamington, Ontario.

The question arises, why Leamington? With no concrete evidence, we must rely on supposition. Ira expanded his farmhouse as his family grew, but eventually, through marriage and career interests, the family dispersed. After his wife died, Ira remarried. There is no telling what family issues that marriage may have created. The farm most likely became a growing workload for Ira as the older sons moved away and he

sold it to William Bird in 1884.

William Jerome states that Ira's oldest sons, George, Albert and Charles (see photo), were first attracted to Leamington. The town, with a growth rate of over 800% ca. 1881, offered exciting opportunities. Natural gas and oil had been discovered and with its port and rail facilities it became a shipping centre for the area's expanding tobacco, lumber and farm produce. Over time it would become the Tomato Capital of Canada (Heinz), and today has the largest concentration of greenhouses in North America. All this suited Albert who was in the transportation business and appealed to other family members who were also in search of a new beginning. Nevertheless there are 37 Rymal cemetery plots in St. Peter's Cemetery on Mohawk Road where far flung family members eventually came home to rest.
(400 words)

This Mountain Memories column appears monthly for the Hamilton Mountain Heritage Society (HMHS). See their Website: Hamiltonheritage.ca or call (905) 575-9326

Follow the HMHS on Facebook

Next meeting @ 7:30, Thursday Nov. 15, 2018

The South Gate Presbyterian Church

120 Clarendon Ave. Plenty of free parking

Subject: The 1918 Influenza in Hamilton

By Dr. Ann Herring, McMaster University

