

John Davidson Jr. and Margaret Hingston

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John Davidson Jr., youngest child of John Davidson Sr. and Helen Ogilvy, was born in 1817 or 1818, in Scotland. He came to Canada at the age of about 2 with his mother and siblings, who were joining their father, established in Dundee, Quebec. In 1837, he became captain in a regiment of volunteers raised by his father as part of the repression of the *Patriote* rebellions of 1837-38. Having distinguished himself by carrying dispatches through the *Patriote* lines, he was appointed by governor Sir John Colborne to a permanent regiment in Montreal [9].

On 3 September 1846, at St. George Anglican Church in Montreal [17], he married Margaret Hingston, born 9 April 1827 at Huntingdon, Quebec, daughter of Lt. Col. Samuel James Hingston and Eleanor McGrath. Hingston had been granted some land in nearby Hinchinbrooke after fighting in the War of 1812. He and John Davidson Sr had led local militias. The witnesses were John's brothers James, who would later marry Margaret's sister, and Alexander.

Likely in 1851¹, the Davidsons and their first three children moved to Bruce Mines, Ontario², where John became storekeeper for a copper mining operation run by the Montreal Mining Corporation [5]. In a company town, the storekeeper is effectively the only source of goods for the entire town. Two winters in a row, John is commended for managing to acquire goods for the winter when the supply ship fails to arrive [14].

¹ Davidson is mentioned in a letter from A. A. Campbell to (Sir) Hugh Allan, dated 10 August 1852. MMC was incorporated in 1850. The Davidsons' third child, William Frederick, born in Quebec on 14 June 1851 was baptized as a Catholic in Montreal on 1 September 1851, in the absence of his father. William H Hingston was a witness. William was later baptized a second time in the Methodist Church in Algoma District in June 1854.

² Bruce Mines is on the North shore of Lake Huron's North Channel, opposite St. Joseph Island, 39 miles S. E. of Sault Ste. Marie. Founded in 1842, it is the oldest copper mining town in Canada. It was named in honour of James Bruce, Lord Elgin, the founder of the Canadian Pacific Railway. [6]

In 1859, John Davidson became Bruce Mines' bookkeeper, taking over an accounting system that a consultant to the company had described a few years earlier as "cumbrous and mystifying" and one "which I may say renders it impossible in a business of the kind in question, to keep any efficient check upon the accounts".

In 1862, John Davidson was "retired from the service" of MMC. The Directors reported to the shareholders that "Notwithstanding repeated instructions to the contrary, the practice of giving far too much extended credit was continued up to July last, the result of which, upon a close analysis of the accounts, now proves to be that a large proportion of outstanding debts must be classed as bad or doubtful, thus sensibly diminishing what have long appeared to be available assets." The stores were to be privatized.[15] The mines, which shipped their ore to Swansea, in Wales, during the 1850s, were forced out of operation when the American market was closed during the Civil War [6].



John Davidson Jr.

The family's whereabouts and means of support are unclear for the next few years until John took a position as agent for an Indian reservation near Sault Ste. Marie, from April 1870 to May 1871, for which he was paid £500 a year [8]. This was probably the Garden River Reservation for Ojibway Indians. In 1867, at the birth of Florence, he was in Bruce Mines, but in 1863 and 1868, at the birth of James and Edward, respectively, he was in Sault Ste. Marie, where his eldest daughter Ellen was now living with her husband, Thomas Towers.

John returned to the mining business in 1871, taking a post as storekeeper at a silver mine in Silver Islet, Ontario, on Lake Superior, near the present-day city of Thunder Bay [1].

In 1876, the family – parents and all the children save the oldest daughters Ellen and Margaret who were by then married, and probably William who appears to have remained in Port Arthur – returned to Montreal. John was now in his late 50s. He is reported as working for a bank [11] and as a bookkeeper for a newspaper (Hugh Graham's *Montreal Star*?) [4]. The family lived at 112 Ste. Famille St., then at 725 Sherbrooke St., before settling at 9 Bishop St., in 1879.

John Davidson died on 24 January 1899 at his residence [18][9]. Mourners at his funeral included Ned, his only remaining son; Mr. Justice Sir Charles Davidson, a nephew; Louis Pinsoneault, a grandson; Arthur Benington, his son-in-law (but reported as a grandson); Sir William Hingston, his brother-in-law; and Richard William Hingston Smith, a nephew. He was buried in Mt. Royal Cemetery.

Margaret outlived him by 10 years and died in Montreal on 4 December 1909. Although baptized as a Catholic, like all her siblings, she died a Presbyterian and was buried in Mt. Royal Cemetery [18][13].

John Davidson and Margaret Hingston had ten children. The first three, Ellen, Margaret, and William, were born in Huntingdon, Quebec, and the last seven in Northern Ontario.

1. Ellen Hingston Davidson, b. 24 August 1847 in Huntingdon, Quebec[7] m. Capt. Thomas A. P. Towers, bef. 1865 [2] . They lived in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario. He died there 25 November 1913 and she 2 November 1924.[20]
2. Margaret Ogilvy Davidson, b. 28 April 1849 in Huntingdon, Quebec [7] m. Alfred Charles Pinsoneault, a civil servant, 9 June 1870 in Montreal [16], d. 15 March 1882 in Montreal [18]
3. William Frederick (Manny) Davidson, b. 14 June 1851 in Elgin [12] [12]. He is reported to have moved to the area of what is now Thunder Bay, Ontario around 1870, where he became an executive in the shipping industry. He may have been an associate of his brother-in-law, Thomas Towers. He died 18 August 1891 in Toronto [19]. He probably never married.
4. Sarah Chesley (Tottie) Davidson, b. 14 June 1852 in Bruce Mines, Ontario [12] d. 30 May 1923 in Montreal [18]. Sarah was probably named after Solomon Chesley, Indian Agent for the St. Regis Indians in Dundee, Quebec, and an old friend of John Davidson Sr.'s. She never married.
5. Frances Bruce (Fanny) Davidson, b. 21 October 1855 in Bruce Mines, Ontario [12], d. 18 May 1946 in Montreal [18]. A spinster, she lived with her sister Flo on Selkirk Avenue in Montreal.
6. Elizabeth (Lizzie) Georgina Davidson, b. 12 April 1858 in Bruce Mines, Ontario.[12] She married Arthur Benington, a journalist, 10 October 1890 in Montreal. She lived in New York City, died in Montreal 1 September 1943, and was buried at Pinelawn, Long Island, NY.
7. John Grant Davidson, b. 18 March 1861 in Bruce Mines, Ontario [12] d. 9 November 1895 in Montreal[18]. He is reported as a bank clerk in 1879 [10] and a land surveyor in 1891 [4]. He never married.
8. James Alexander Davidson, b. 27 January 1863 in Sault-Ste-Marie, Ontario, [12] d. 30 December 1888 in Port Arthur, Ontario and probably never married [20].
9. Florence (Flo) Campbell Davidson, b. July 1866 in Bruce Mines, Ontario [12] d. 13 January 1934 in Montreal[18]. She never married.
10. Edward Alfred (Ned) Davidson, b. 1868/9, probably at Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, d. 30 May 1924 in Montreal [18]. He was a clerk in Montreal and was living at

his parents' house at 9 Bishop St. when he died [3][4]. He never married.

Edward Benington wrote:

“Mother was brought up in Canada in the Victorian era when “acceptable gentlemen” were doctors, bankers, lawyers, ministers, and apparently some writers, certainly no one “in trade”. Her family was never wealthy, but very staid and correct and consisted of four brothers and six sisters. I well remember aunts "Tottie", "Barlow", and "Moe" when I visited them as a boy in Montreal. All were typical spinsters. There was also uncle Ned, to me a romantic man who was a captain in the Victorian Rifles, was frequently tempted by the bottle, and was a wonderful story teller.”

It must have been an unusual family. Of the six girls, only three married: Ellen and Margaret, the eldest, and Lizzie. There is no evidence any of the four boys did, so none of John Jr.'s descendants bear the Davidson name. And, as of 1891, when John was 73 and Margaret 63, all their unmarried children except Manny, ranging in age from 21 to 36, were living under their parents' roof, at 9 Bishop St.

SOURCES

- [1] Elinor Barr, *Silver Islet: striking it rich in Lake Superior*, Natural Heritage; 2nd Printing edition (July 15, 1995)
- [2] *Canada Census, 1871*, ancestry.com
- [3] *Canada Census, 1881*, ancestry.com
- [4] *Canada Census, 1891*, ancestry.com
- [5] *Canada Directory, 1857*
- [6] *Encyclopedia Canadiana*.
- [7] *Register of Huntingdon Episcopal Church*, Huntingdon, Quebec. [All Quebec vital records are from *Quebec, Vital and Church Records (Drouin Collection) 1621-1967*], ancestry.com]
- [8] *Report of the Indian Branch of the Department of the Secretary of State for the Provinces*, Ottawa, 1872.
- [9] *Obituary of John Davidson Jr.*, Montreal Star, 25 January 1899.
- [10] *Lovell's Directory*, Montreal, 1878-1879
- [11] *Lovell's Directory*, Montreal, 1880-1881
- [12] *Wesleyan Methodist Baptismal Records, 1825-1910*. United Church of Canada Archives.
- [13] *Obituary of Margaret Hingston*, Montreal Star, 5 December 1909
- [14] Montreal Mining Company, *Annual Reports to Shareholders*, 1855 and 1856.
- [15] Montreal Mining Company, *Annual Reports to Shareholders*, 1862
- [16] Register of Eglise Marie-Reine-du-Monde, Montreal.
- [17] Register of St. George Anglican Church, Montreal
- [18] Register of Mount Royal Cemetery, Montreal.
- [19] *Obituary of William F. Davidson*, Montreal Star, August 21, 1891.
- [20] Ontario death records, ancestry.com

