

4. Hamilton LEITH

Born 26 Jan 1818 at Enniskillen, Co Fermanagh, Ireland, Hamilton was the younger son of John LEITH Sr and Jane HAMILTON. He became a believer of Jesus Christ at age 13. In 1833 Hamilton accompanied his parents and siblings to Inverness, Megantic Co., Quebec, where they farmed.

On 10 Apr 1837 Hamilton was united in marriage to Marion CURRIE, a daughter of Robert CURRIE and Marion ALEXANDER. The ceremony was conducted by Rev John BORLAND, whom one source called the "Father of Megantic Methodism," at the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Ireland Twp. Hamilton's brother, [3] John LEITH Jr., and brother-in-law, [2a] John WILTON, were the witnesses. Marion was from Scotland and was born at Berwick on Tweed in 1817. She and her parents had left Scotland in 1830.

Four children were born to Hamilton and Marion at Megantic Co. in two-year intervals: Robert in 1838, then Jessie Jane, Marion and Maria. And whereas the births of the older two took place at Inverness, those of the younger two occurred at neighboring Nelson Twp. Further, Marion's parents continued to have children at Inverness during these years.

The LEITH, WILTON, and CURRIE families were rather close-knit, and the church was at the center of their lives. Moreover, although he was a farmer, Hamilton is believed to have preached occasionally during these early years.

Sometime between 1844 and 1847 Hamilton, Marion and the children left Megantic Co., settling near Port Hope, Durham Co., Ontario. Son Thomas arrived during this period, and most references cite Port Hope as his place of nativity in Nov 1847 (but see section [17] Thomas).

The earliest record of Hamilton being in Port Hope is 1848, when a local census indicates two persons were in the household. The next census, taken in 1850, shows a family of seven. Perhaps Hamilton and one son had gone ahead to clear some land and build a place to stay?

But why did Hamilton leave Megantic Co.? By the mid 1840's both Hamilton and his brother John Jr had married, and each had had four children. Being the older, John Jr was likely the one to inherit John Sr's farm, which could support only one family. With the available land in Megantic Co. being taken up by new immigrants, going west may have been a necessary, as well as attractive, option.

For the 1851 census, Hamilton, Marion, and six children are seen near Elizabethville on lot 27 of concession 8 of Hope Twp, for by then son William had been born. They all resided in a one story, log cabin. On adjacent farms were the families of William ERWAIN and Richard PICKUP. With Richard was an elderly Elizabeth LEATH, presumably his mother-in-law, from Ireland.

At the same time the family of Malcolm LEITH Sr was residing just to the south near Perrytown on lot 17 concession 7, a little closer to Port Hope. As pointed out in the Introduction, it is hypothesized that Malcolm was a younger brother of [1] John LEITH Sr. If so, Malcolm might have encouraged Hamilton to relocate in the Port Hope area.

On 31 Dec 1855 Hamilton purchased 50 acres in the NW 1/4 of lot 27, concession 8, from the estate of the late John Tucker WILLIAMS. He paid 150 pounds for it. Seventh child Henrietta had arrived by then, and in the following year, 1856, a Methodist church was constructed at Elizabethville.

By the end of the 1850's Hamilton decided to pursue a calling in the ministry. Now, Victoria College, an institution originally founded by Methodist clergy, had received its charter at nearby Cobourg in 1841. And, although no records have been found to verify this, Hamilton may have studied there. Indeed, his son Thomas studied at Victoria College in the 1870's.

Thus, in 1860 Hamilton began preaching under the direction of an elder at Lindsay, Victoria Co., some 35 miles northwest of Port Hope, and in 1861 he was received on trial there. Lindsay was about 25 miles from his farm at Elizabethville, so commuting was not a likely option.

In fact, on the 1861 census at Hope Twp, Hamilton is listed as being "absent," despite being a farmer. Oldest son Robert probably worked the land. The same census shows the whole family on concession 8, including their eighth child, Hamilton. The families of David & Jane TREW Sr and David & Mary SLEATH were on adjacent farms.

So, in 1860 Hamilton began his calling as an itinerant minister and was in the Tiverton Circuit for the New Connexion Methodists, changing locations every one-to two-years. (See Appendix for a chronological listing of his charges.) Most of Hamilton's charges had from six to thirty appointments. In them he had much driving to do, but he was of vigorous health and stood the strain readily. He was popular, and his genial Irish heartiness and discretion led him to accomplish results where others would have failed.

A number of events transpired in the 1860's. In 1864 daughter Marion left home to marry Robert WILSON. Two years later, Hamilton and Marion had their last child, John. In 1865 the family barn mysteriously burned back on the Port Hope farm, and in 1868 Hamilton sold the 50 acres to neighbor David TREW Sr, whose children married three of Robert WILSON's siblings.

Hamilton and family were at Goderich South in Huron Co. for the 1871 census, although Maria and Thomas had also moved out by then. The nearest neighbors were Scottish natives David MORGAN, William MORGAN, and James DOUGLAS, who were all farmers, and Robert RUSSELL, a weaver. It is rather humbling to compare the "Livestock" and "Return of Cultivable Land" schedules of Hamilton and his neighbors. All he possessed was one horse, one milk cow and 100 lbs. of butter, contrasted with the neighbors' bountiful yield of wheat, potatoes, hay, etc. It's obvious Hamilton was trusting the Lord his God for meeting all his needs.

In spite of this perceived inequity with his neighbors, Hamilton was generous, large-hearted and always had a witty saying or joke for everybody. One might say the joy of the Lord was his strength.

Another LEITH was in the Goderich area, Mary Leith STURDY, the widow of Christopher STURDY. No relation to Hamilton has been verified, but Mary was just a year older than Hamilton's sister [2] Ann. Further, the STURDY family was of Co. Fermanagh, Ireland, and had left the Emerald Isle for Canada in 1832.

By 1881, when the census was taken for Hamilton at Sutton, York Co., Ontario, only wife

Marion, Jessie, and John remained in the household with him. The nearest neighbors were the James KEARNES family of England and the Ulrich MIERS family of Switzerland.

In 1883, while Hamilton was at his last charge in Tiverton, son Robert died. Hamilton was superannuated the following year, and he took up residence at Port Elgin. Daughter Marion died in 1886. Then, in 1891 Hamilton, Marion and Jessie moved to Hamilton, Ontario, where they lived out their years.

Hamilton received a gold-headed cane with diamonds from the Methodist ministers of Hamilton for his 60th wedding anniversary. And on 21 Apr 1901, shortly after that year's census was taken, Hamilton died of grip at his house on 367 Hughson St. N. As death approached, he imagined exhorting a congregation to turn from their sins and accept the forgiveness of Christ, pleading, "Come to Jesus, oh, why don't you come!"

Per his request, no flowers were present at the funeral, conducted by Rev. Theo J. PARR in the Simcoe Street Methodist church. Instead, the organ, choir gallery and pulpit were all draped in black. Interment followed at Hamilton Cemetery.

Marion continued to reside at the home, her health gradually deteriorating. Son William died in 1905. Thus, Marion succumbed to old age in 1911, having outlived her husband, three of her children, and several grandchildren. She was buried next to her beloved Hamilton.

4.	HAMILTON LEITH	b 26 Jan 1818 d 21 Apr 1901	Enniskillen, (N) IRE Hamilton, ON
4a.	Marion Currie	b 22 Mar 1817 m 10 Apr 1837 d 14 Jan 1911	Berwick-on-Tweed, SCO Inverness, QC Hamilton, ON
13.	i Robert Currie	b 06 May 1838	Inverness, QC
14.	ii Jessie Jane	b 29 Apr 1840	Inverness, QC
15.	iii Marion	b 10 Jun 1842	Nelson, QC
16.	iv Maria	b 12 Aug 1844	Nelson, QC
17.	v Thomas Bishop	b 06 Nov 1847	Port Hope, ON
18.	vi William	b 26 May 1850	Port Hope, ON
19.	vii Henrietta	b 21 Sep 1852	Port Hope, ON
20.	viii Hamilton Currie	b 04 Aug 1857	Port Hope, ON
21.	ix John Frederick	b 06 Sep 1866	Collingwood, ON

Appendix C Pastorates of Rev. Hamilton Leith

Tiverton Conference
c. 1860 -- R. on T. 1861
R. F. C. & 0.1864

1860 Lindsay 2
1862 Southampton 1

1863	Arran	2	
1865	Howard	2	
1867	Cayuga	2	
1869	Lavender	1	
1870	Goderich South	2	
1872	Bolton	1	
1874	Bay of Quinte	1	
1875	Flinton and Addington Rd.	3	
1878	Sutton	3	

Toronto Conference

1881	Woodford	2	
1883	Tiverton	1	

Guelph Conference

1884	Port Elgin, Sup'd	7	
1892	Hamilton, Sup'd	3	

Hamilton Conference

1895	Hamilton, Sup'd	6	
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c. = the year traveled under an elder

R on T = received on trial

RFC&O = received into full communion & ordained

Sup'd = superannuated

Submitted by:
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