

Clara Aker Sheppard

SECOND GENERATION

Wy's Mother and Relatives

"Duck"

Clara Henrietta Aker Sheppard

B: 5/00/1878

M: 10/26/1903 James Clarence
Sheppard at Aker Family home, 515
N. 3rd Street, Grand Forks

D: 2/16/1968, age 89 Grand Forks



The youngest of George Aker's four daughters, Clara grew up in the family home at 523 North Third Street and attended the neighborhood grade school and Central High School where her older sisters had graduated – Elizabeth and Minnie in 1890 and Laura in 1893.

Details about how Clarence and Clara met are not known. She married the up-and-coming business owner in 1903 when she was 25 and he was 26. The young couple would purchase a home at 322 North 4th Street, where they lived until 1923, then moved in 1923 to a brick home at 71 4th Ave. South (the property demolished and behind the 1997 flood wall). An oversized garage could house three laundry delivery trucks.

Clara was a homemaker who supported Clarence in his various business, sporting and civic activities. She would raise two boys, Willis (born in 1906) and Kenneth Wyman (born 8 years later in 1914).

Clarence's business and his financial success allowed her to hire part-time help in the house and made working for the Sheppard appealing. A 1914 classified ad read,

WANTED. Good girl for general housework. No family washing. Mrs. J.C. Sheppard, 322 North Fourth.

Items appearing in the Herald (digitized from 1914 to 1922 at the time this history was written) suggest they led busy lives, including guests such as a cousin from Winnipeg, Joseph Sheppard, and brother-in-law Leman

Noble while en route from Loma, MT to Fort Smith, AR while in the military during World War I. In 1915, Noble's son Harold resided with the Sheppard while attending UND. Meanwhile, her father George Aker, who by then spent summers "on his claim" in Loma MT, spent winters with the Sheppards.

Clara traveled with Clarence to various destinations, including Kalamazoo, MI, where her sister Elizabeth resided for her husband work (and where the above photo of her in the hat was taken). She made various trips to Minneapolis and St. Paul, including to attend the annual Winter Carnival.

Items on the women's pages of the *Herald* suggest the Sheppards attended various social events and dinner parties, but not women's clubs. She was enlisted in by her sister Laura in a variety of fundraising and other activities to support groups such as the Visiting Nurses and the Red Cross and assisted Laura in serving lunch to the North Side Circle of the Plymouth Congregation Church.



Clara loved the outdoors, despite problems with her feet that impeded her walking and earned her the nickname "Duck." She attended at least one hunting camp with Clarence nearby Rugby. The couple enjoyed visiting friends with homes on Maple Lake and erected their own cabin in 1920 (see Appendix:100 Years on Maple Lake).

Reflecting her interest, she won second place in a 1914 contest appearing on the *Herald's* Bargains Page that invited women to identify and describe a dozen animals found in nature. The contest was judged on the completeness, accuracy and neatness of a list that required identifying a stag, kid, calf, opossum, wolf, coney (rabbit), mole, lamb, marmot, fox, beaver, marabou (stork), mink and seal.

In their later years, the Sheppards lived on Fourth Avenue South, but would relocate to a house on the grounds of Wy's Gardens in East Grand Forks, where the couple resided until when Shep died in 1951. Duck, who became profoundly hard of hearing, later resided in the Bellview Apartments on Fourth Avenue South, near the home of her son, until her death in 1968.

Willis Aker Sheppard

B: 4/3/1906

D: 9/6/1918, age 12, Grand
Forks

Son: Willis Aker Sheppard

Twelve years after his birth, when his younger brother Wy was age 4, tragedy struck the Sheppards with the death of their first son, Willis. The child had been struck in the head by a horse, resulting in ongoing seizures. A doctor explained a new surgical procedure might alleviate the suffering. Clara but reluctant, but with sister Laura's encouragement, agreed to the procedure. However, the surgery failed and Willis died. A four-line notice in the newspaper explained simply that the child (who the paper referred to as "Willie") had passed away and private services would be held.



Willis was notable for his shock of curly hair. He is shown here at about age 8 holding his younger brother Wy (upper right) and with his two of his dad's prize hunting dogs (lower right).

Clara's Siblings and Their Descendants

Clara and her three older sisters comprised the second generation of Akers in North Dakota.



Aker Sisters: Early Years Left (circa 1880): Elizabeth, Laura, Clara and Minnie. Right (circa 1890): Clara, Elizabeth (seated), Laura (standing), Minnie.

Elizabeth Dorothy Aker Noble

B: 4/13/1873 Grand Forks

M: 6/12/1895 Leman Johnson

Noble, Grand Forks

B: 5/19/1870 Crystal Lake, MN

D: 3/14/1948 Fort Benton, MT

D: 6/3/1960, age 90 San Diego CA

*Children, grandchildren and great-grand-children: See Family Search.com**ID No. LH7F-KRG (Elizabeth Aker)***Harold Aker Noble** 1897-1991

M: Mildred Mae Budge 1899-1936

John Aker Noble 1928-____

M: Gloria E. Greenman 1928-

John Hill Noble 1958-

M: Mary Robin Stuart

Marion June Noble 1931-

M: Dawson

M: 2/18/1939 Ruth Estelle

Creveling nee Woodworth

Dorothy Lincoln Creveling 1920-2002 (stepdaughter: 273J-MRV)

M: Willard Ernest Eder 1916-2009

Kenneth Leman Noble 1800=

M: Geneva Kathryn Hancock

Robert Leman Noble 1925-____

M: Betty Lou Howard, 1928-

Mark Leman Noble 1956-

Diane Marie Shields 1960-

Donald Kenneth Noble 1927-2000 *No record of marriage***Joseph P. Noble** 1938-1985

M: Doris M. Clemons

*No children located***Gerald Proteus Noble** 1907-1977

M/div: Evelyn Josephine Little

M: Ernestine Elizabeth Springer

Patricia Elizabeth Noble 1938-

2003

M: George B. Woodie 1927-2012

Jason David Woodie 1968-

2006

Sharon Ann Noble 1940-2002

M: Lloyd Ray Radford Hicks

1940-2012

Gerald Kurt Hicks 1963-2010**Scott Lyon Hicks** 1967-1968

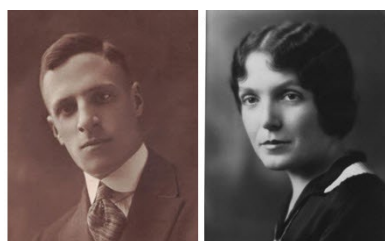
M: David John Dennis 1926-

1992

Elizabeth Dorothy Aker, the oldest Aker daughter, became responsible for much of the care of her younger sisters following the death of her mother. At age 22 she married Leman Johnson Noble in Grand Forks. Details about their courtship are unknown. During her life, Elizabeth followed her husband

*Lee and Elizabeth Aker Noble, ca 1895, ca1940*

as he pursued a career in electrical plant management that took him to Kalispell MT, Kalamazoo and Jackson MI and eventually Fort Smith AR. For a brief period in the mid-1910s, before moving to Arkansas, he farmed in Montana, where his father-in-law George Aker had staked claim. During this period, the couple raised three sons. Upon his retirement, he and Elizabeth returned to Montana. After Lee's death, son Gerald gave up farming and the Montana property was sold. Gerald went to work as an electrician in Idaho Falls, ID and and later was a maintenance man at Phillips Petroleum. Elizabeth moved to San Diego to reside near their oldest son.

*Harold and Mildred Noble*

Harold Noble was Elizabeth's only offspring with ties to Grand Forks. He lived with Shep and Clara while studying engineering at UND and married his wife, Grand Forks native Mildred Budge, in the city in 1922. Through the years, he maintained contact with his aunts Clara and Laura. Following the electrical engineering footsteps of his father, he became a senior executive of San Diego Gas and Electric. In his retirement, was the principal family member who pursued the genealogy of the Aker and Bahn families. His son John became an engineer for General Electric. Meanwhile, his brother Ken – and Ken's three sons – all worked in engineering-related positions for electric and gas utilities in Oklahoma -- near Ken's childhood home in Fort Smith.

Minnie Aker was a tragic victim at age 19 of the 1894 typhoid fever epidemic that swept Grand Forks and the nationwide. Her youngest sisters Laura and Clara were only 17 and 15, respectively. According to a newspaper account, Laura was among the first to fall victim and



Minnie Aker

B: 8/25/1874 Grand Forks

D: 4/23/1894, age 19 Grand Forks
(typhoid fever)

Never married

convalesced for the disease for 18 weeks. A servant girl and young who boarded in the house were also victims. Minnie had given up a position in a local store to care for the others and was taken by the fever in less than two weeks due to heart failure.

The *Plain Dealer* newspaper, which was published in Grand Forks for only a few years in the early 1890s, described Minnie as follows:

She was always vivacious, whole-souled and sprightly girl. She graduated creditably from the high school in 1890, and many will remember the piquancy and prettiness of her little speeches; that ripple of her laughter; so free from care; so silvery with unalloyed sincerity. In the shadows that profound sorrow in Brother Aker's stricken home, what poor consolation can words give? But much as we all feel and can but weakly express, we tender them at the altar of sacrifice, with human sympathy and divine hope.

Laura Aker Green

B: 9/24/1876 Grand Forks, ND

M: 6/15/1898 Robert Green Jr.,
Grand Forks

B: 1870 Newton, MA

Moved with parents to Grand
Forks at age 16 in March 1886.

D: 12/13/1949, age 79 Grand
Forks

D: 11/22/1969, age 93 Grand Forks

No children

Laura Aker Green, the third oldest Aker girl, holds a special place in the memory of her niece Jean and nephew Bob as a favorite relative and very much a part of their extended family.



Aunt Laura through the years

Laura lived for 76 years on the same block of North Street where she had moved with her father and mother. After she married her husband, prominent brick mason and building contractor Robert Green Jr., they built a brick home two doors down the street at 515 North Third Street.



Two Aker Sisters – Laura and Clara 1890, Clara and Laura ca 1910, Laura and Clara ca 1960.

Green's father was a prominent dairy farmer. His sister, Jean Taylor, was principal at Belmont Elementary School. Another sister, Marion, married Harry B. (H.B.) Finch, who began his career as a grocer in Grand Forks and worked his way up to become CEO of the Nash Finch Company.

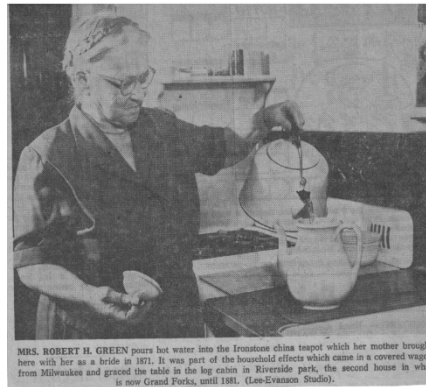
The Greens and Sheppards socialized frequently, and following Uncle Bob's death in 1949, Laura was routinely a part of holiday events holiday events in the home of Wy and Alice, along with Wy's mother known as "Grandma Duck."

Laura worked in the offices of the Grand Forks Chamber of Commerce when it was organized under the leadership of W.W. Blain but was mostly known in town for her various community involvements.



Husband Bob Green Jr. and Laura

She was a charter member of the Plymouth Congregational Church (later the Federated Church) where she was a leader in the Sunday school and active in the yearly bizarre and for a period served as treasurer. She also authored a four-page history of the church that focused on women's work. Her husband Bob was a Mason, and she was active in the Masonic Auxiliary for many years and collected donations for the Crippled Children's Hospital sponsored by the Masons as well as the Red Cross.



Grand Forks Herald 1957 photo accompanying "Mrs. Robert Green Tells of Early Day Kitchens."

In 1957 she was the focus of a *Herald* feature story about the rugged life of homemakers in the early days of Grand Forks. This resulted in a radio interview on KNOX Radio has been preserved and digitized and is now part of her papers on deposit in the Special Collections Department of UND's Chester Fritz Library. In a second *Herald* feature focused the limited attention paid to Thanksgiving by the early settlers.