

Occupants of Navy Jack House 1907 – 1971

The Navy Jack House chain of ownership succeeding John "Navy Jack " Thomas was limited to just a few families.

John Lawson and his family lived in the house from 1907 until about 1924, according to Vancouver city directories. Lawson named the house Hollyburn, for the holly trees he planted on his new domain and for the streams of his native Scotland.

Lawson, known as the 'father of West Vancouver', established the foundation for West Vancouver's municipal and economic future. As well as a home for the Lawson family, the house served as the community's first post office and, after West Vancouver's incorporation in 1912, Reeve Lawson conducted council meetings in the house. Ever the entrepreneur, Lawson operated a general store and a real estate office nearby on what would become 17th Street.

Little is known about the next owner of the house. Emma Macfarlane was a widow and a nurse who appears to have owned the house from about 1924 to 1928 and rented it out. The West Van News ran a notice on April 5, 1929 that a Miss Macfarlane was having a house built on Bellevue between 21st and 22nd.

The Navy Jack Thomas House Statement of Significance says the Hookham family was in the house from 1928 onwards and suggests that they rented the house from Emma Macfarlane. Notices in the West Van News say that the Hookhams bought the house (June 15) and made alternations to the exterior (September 21) in 1928.

The house was owned by the Hookhams until 1971 when it was purchased by Lloyd and Bette Williams.

In 1977, the municipality began purchasing houses along the Ambleside waterfront from 14th through 18th streets. After several years of negotiation, the house was sold to West Vancouver in 1990, with the covenant of a life tenancy for Mr. Williams, that concluded with his death in 2017.

In 1986, Lloyd Williams wrote about his family connection with the Thomas family in the West Vancouver Historical Society newsletter – History-onics (Published January 1987).

In 1881, Mr. Williams' grandfather, Francis Williams, brought his family, including sons Alfred and Claud, across the inlet to a waterfront homestead situated about where 28th Street is today. The Thomas family was their nearest neighbour. The story goes that Thomas's son, William "Samson", known as a good boatman, saved Alfred Thomas from drowning in the waters at the mouth of the Capilano River.

The chain of ownership succeeding John "Navy Jack" Thomas

1. John Lawson and family (1907-ca.1924)
2. Emma Macfarlane (ca.1924-1928)
3. Leonard Hookham and family (1928-1971)
4. Lloyd Williams family (1971 – 2017)
5. District of West Vancouver – present owner.