William Henry Biglow and Mary Palmer

William Henry Biglow, (Samuel Bigelow) b. 01-Jun-1844 in Hope Twp, Durham County, Ontario, d. 06-Dec-1913 in Holland, RM Victoria, Manitoba, bu. 08-Dec-1913 in Brookdale Cemetery, Holland, Manitoba, occupation Farmer.

He married Mary Palmer, m. 1864 in Durham County, Ontario, b. 12-Jun-1844 in Hope Twp, Durham County, Ontario, (daughter of Mathew Palmer and Thomasine Bullied) d. 03-Mar-1938 at Barr Avenue, Holland, RM Victoria, Manitoba, cause of death "Cerebral Hemorrhage", bu. 08-Mar-1938 in Brookdale Cemetery, Holland, Manitoba.

William Henry Bigelow was born 01 June 1844 in Hope Twp, Durham County, Ontario, the youngest child of Samuel Bigelow and Susanna Barkwell. No record of his birth has been found; however, his birthdate is given on his death record and on the 1901 census.

William’s mother, Susanna, died when he was very young, sometime between the year of his birth and the 1852 census. He is not listed on the 1852 census with his widowed father and siblings; however, reference is made to one male being absent and this is assumed to be William.

William’s father, Samuel, died in 1857 leaving him an orphan when he was 13 years old. On 12 December 1860, William commenced work for a farmer, Edmond Wilson of Hope Twp, at the rate of four dollars per month. On the 1861 census, he is listed in Hope Twp, with the Maize family: Alice, a widow aged 74 and her unmarried daughter, Ann, aged 39. We do not know if William was still working at this time for Edmond Wilson, a neighbour on the next farm, or as general help for the Maizes while receiving room and board there.

In 1864, at the age of 20 years, William married Mary Palmer, also age 20, daughter of Mathew Palmer and Thomasine Bullied. Mary’s parents had emigrated from Devon, England in 1843, the year before she was born. Mary’s two older siblings were born in Loxhore, Devon. Mary was born 12 June 1844 in Hope Twp, Durham County, Ontario.

William and Mary’s eight oldest children were born in Durham County. On the 1871 Ontario census, the Bigelow family was living on Lot 3, Concession 7 in Cavan Twp. so it is likely that at least Samuel, born in 1870, and Elizabeth, born in 1872, were born in Cavan Twp. However, by the time of Louisa’s birth in 1878, they were living in Manvers Twp. Louisa is the only one of their children born in Ontario whose birth was registered. She died sometime before 1881 as she does not appear with the family on that census. Therefore at least one and perhaps several of their children were also born in Manvers Twp. A community history book states that the Bigelow “family left the small community of Pontypool, Ontario near Port Hope.” Pontypool is located in Manvers Twp.

In 1880, the family made a momentous move west to the province of Manitoba which, having been recently surveyed, was now being rapidly settled by newcomers from all over. All five of Mary’s surviving younger brothers, Thomas, Simeon, Benjamin, Joseph and Edward Palmer, along with their first cousin, Samuel Bullied, were among the very first settlers in the Holland-Treherne area of Manitoba. Four Palmer brothers filed for a homestead in 1878 with the youngest
brother, Edward, filing in 1879 when he had turned 18. The Palmer brothers and cousin Samuel are found on the 1881 Manitoba census for Mountain, Marquette which included the Holland and Treherne areas.

It was at the time of this move west that William’s family name of Bigelow became changed to the spelling of Biglow. Somehow the “e” was dropped. It may have been that the name was spelled “Biglow” on land documents or other legal papers, and that spelling was used from then on. One family story says that the name was changed because in those days every family had their surname printed on the burlap bags in which grain was transported, so they could tell whose was whose. As you were charged by the letter, William decided to drop the “e” so there were fewer letters to pay for.56

William filed for a homestead on the NE ¼ of Section 30-7-10 W on 24 August 1880.57 This land is found in the Rural Municipality of Victoria about three and one-half miles due east of Holland, Manitoba. The Biglow family left Ontario in the winter or early spring of 1880; at that time, it was quite an arduous trek west as the Canadian Pacific Railway had not yet been completed (the CPR arrived from the east at Winnipeg only in 1882). They would have traveled west by rail through the United States to Minnesota and then hooked up with the St. Paul, Minneapolis & Manitoba Railway going north. This branch line, from St. Paul to Winnipeg, had been completed only in 1878, and was the first railway line to reach Winnipeg. According to a newspaper article published in 1934, the Biglow family came “to Winnipeg in 1880, proceeding to Holland via Portage la Prairie, in a covered sleigh.”

Their first home was a newly-built log shanty with factory-made cotton windows. At the time of their arrival, Mary was one of only three white women in the district. The only power available to these early pioneers was of course oxen or horses. Cecil Biglow, a grandson of William and Mary, remembered the fourteen-inch wood beam breaking plow, which was used to break the virgin land. His father, Elias Biglow, told him of some of the difficulties in the early days:

My father told me that he and his father had the first two loads of wheat sheaves drawn four miles to be threshed. This was done with great difficulty because of the marshy land and the fact that there were no roads.58

William and Mary along with their seven surviving children appear on the 1881 census in the district of Mountain, Marquette. They were to have four more sons born to them in Manitoba. Three of these sons died young, before the age of three years, with only William Charles surviving to adulthood. Although William Henry’s land is now located in the R.M. of Victoria, the original local government district created in 1880 was much larger and was called the county of Norfolk. In 1884, Norfolk was divided into the rural municipalities of North Norfolk and South Norfolk. In 1902 another division was made with South Norfolk becoming the present-day South Norfolk and Victoria. The births of William and Mary’s younger sons were thus registered in the R.M. of South Norfolk.

William and Mary’s children had little chance to attend school. Most of them were quite young when the family moved to Manitoba in 1880 and no school was built in the area for almost a decade. Elias, probably as well as his older siblings, could neither read nor write. He did learn to write his name so that he could sign legal documents and
cheques. Elias liked to tell his children that he went to school for a few days but received forty lickings so never went back. A school in the village of Holland was not completed until 1888. A country school called Centreville, located on the southeast corner of Section 6-8-10, was built in 1890 which was just over a mile north of the Biglow farm. It was called Centreville because it was located exactly half way between the villages of Holland and Treherne. It is possible that William and Mary’s youngest child, William, attended Centreville School.

William received legal title to his homestead quarter-section of land on 21 July 1885. He and Mary lived on this homestead quarter right until the time of their retirement from farming. In 1900, William sold the east half of this quarter to his oldest son, Elias. The 1894 and 1896 List of Electors for South Norfolk also show William as the owner of the NE¼ of Section 19-7-10. This quarter was later owned by his son, Samuel. At some point William also bought the SW¼ of Section 21-7-10 which he owned as late as 1903.

William retired from farming in 1900 and he and Mary moved right into the village of Holland, where they bought a house on Barr Avenue, located on lot 3, block 10. In the same block, they also bought lot 9 where there was a barn. This barn housed the horse they used for transportation and a cow which provided them with milk, cream and butter.

Some time after retiring, William together with his oldest son, Elias, bought the SW¼ of Section 34-6-11, each with half interest. This was a wood lot and provided both families with an adequate supply of wood for fuel to keep their houses warm for many winters. When William died, his half-interest was willed to Elias.

William always wore a full goatee; later in life, both his full head of hair and his goatee turned a silvery white. He died 6 December 1913 at the age of 69 years at his home in Holland.

------------ Obituary ------------

Holland Observer, 11 Dec 1913

William Henry Biglow

Mr. W. H. Biglow, after an illness of eight weeks, passed away on Saturday, 6th Dec. He had reached the age of 69 years. The funeral service was held at the home on Monday, Dec. 8th at 2 p.m., whence the cortege proceeded to Holland Cemetery for the interment. The late Mr. Biglow was born in Ontario. He came to Manitoba with his family 33 years ago and homesteaded 3 1/2 miles east of Holland where he lived until 12 years ago when he retired from the farm and took up residence in Holland. His widow, three sons and four daughters survive him. The sons are E. J. Biglow of Holland, S. E. Biglow of Med. Hat, W. C. Biglow of Wadena, Sask.; and the daughters are Mrs. James Armstrong of Medicine Hat, Mrs. Fred Carlton of Swift Current, Mrs. A. Harrison of Holland and Mrs. W. O. Scott of Winnipeg.

In loving memory of

William Henry Biglow
beloved husband of Mary Biglow
who departed this life December 6th, 1913
Aged 69 years, 6 months, 6 days
Interred at Brookdale Cemetery
December 8th, 1913
Holland, Manitoba

Day by day we all do miss him,
Words would fail our loss to tell,
But in heaven we hope to meet him,
Evermore with him to dwell.

In the midst of life we are in death.

William’s last will and testament was dated 10 October 1913, two months before his death.

------------ Last Will and Testament ------------

Probated 7 Jan 1914

I give, devise and bequeath all my Real and Personal Estate of which I may die possessed in the manner following, that is to say: the south half of the south west quarter of Section Thirty-four (34) Township Six (6) in Range Eleven (11) West to my son, Elias John Biglow, he to supply his mother with all the wood for fuel as long as
there is any wood on the above land and I leave twenty-five dollars (25.00) in cash to each of my

In addition to this I bequeth [sic] to my son, William Chas. Biglow all papers held by me against the said William Chas. Biglow to be given absolutely [sic] free to him at my desese [sic].

I beaqueth [sic] to my wife, Mary Biglow, all the rest of my estate, money and mortgages and securities held by me to become the property of my wife, Mary Biglow as long as she lives, and in the event of her dying any time before the children, the balance of the estate to be divided between all the children equaely [sic].

The twenty-five dollars each in cash that is to be paid to my children to be paid as soon as conveniently after my decease. My clothes to be all divided between my son's, Ealis [sic] John family and when I die to be buried in my black suit of clothes.

In the event of my wife, Mary Biglow, not wanting to keep the little pony, Tip, it to be given to Clifford Biglow, son of Elias J. Biglow. My son, Elias J. Biglow, to keep the pony until Clifford is old enough to drive it. Cart and harness to go with this pony als [sic] the buggy.

All the residue of my estate not hereinbefore disposed of I give, devise and bequeath unto my wife, Mary Biglow, as long as she lives. And I nominate and appoint Charles Williams of Treherne Post Office and Elias John Biglow of Holland Post Office to be executors of this my last Will and Testament.

The total value of William’s estate was assessed at $8,663.81. Following is the inventory:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Household furniture</td>
<td>150.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 small Shetland pony</td>
<td>75.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 set harness and pony buggy</td>
<td>25.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 cow</td>
<td>50.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promissory Notes &amp; interest</td>
<td>1514.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money secured by mortgages</td>
<td>6169.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Real Estate
N½ of legal subdivision 4, SW¼ 34-6-11W 75.00
Legal subdivision 3 “ 34-6-11W 400.00
S½ of “ 4, part of 34-6-11W 200.00
Money in the U. Bank of Canada, Holland 5.81

The promissory notes and mortgages had been given to his sons as well as neighbours in the community.

Mary was to survive her husband by 24 years. Later in life, her eyesight gradually deteriorated until she became blind. Her grandson, Cecil Biglow, remembered that “my Grandmother Biglow was quite blind the last several years of her life. She was taken care of by a Miss Carter in the later part of her ninety-six year life span.”

Several of her grandsons remember Mary as a stern, severe woman, although it should be kept in mind that was the perspective of active, young boys. Cecil, who on one occasion along with his brother Sidney, stayed with his grandparents because of illness in the family, said: “I would say that we were there for two weeks, and also say that Grandma Biglow was pretty stiff as far as discipline was concerned.”

Great-granddaughter Linda (Biglow) Hearn also remembered Mary:

I remember my great grandmother, Mary Thomisena. She died at the age of 93. She had been blind for many years and lived in a little house in town . . . Mary Thomisena was a feisty little lady and although unable to see, she handled her own money. My dad marveled at the fact that she could tell a five-dollar bill from a one. . . There was no social security in great grandma’s day and yet for twenty-five years after her husband’s death she managed very well living in her own little house with the assistance of a paid housekeeper.”
--- 90th Birthday Announcement ---

*Manitoba Free Press, 12 Jun 1934*

**Mrs. Mary Biglow, Holland Pioneer, Is Ninety Today**
Is Town's Oldest Mother and Has for Many Years Been Honored at Annual Service
(Canadian Press Despatch)

Holland, Man., June 12 - Mrs. Mary Biglow, Holland's oldest mother, who has for many years been guest of honor at Mother's Day services on that account, and received a handsome bouquet from the congregation is 90 years old today. Though her sight is failing, she is enjoying excellent health and will be at home to her many friends, who never fail to honor her on her birthday. Born in Hope County, Ont., June 12, 1844, she was married in 1864 and came with her husband and five daughters to Winnipeg in 1880, proceeding to Holland via Portage la Prairie in a covered sleigh and made their home in a newly built log shanty, with factory cotton windows, Mrs. Biglow being one of three white women in the district. Mr. Biglow died in 1913. The family consisted of six daughters and four sons, five of these are still living: S. E. Biglow, Holland; William, Seattle; Mrs. Armstrong, Leduc, Sask.; Mrs. F. Carlton, Cabri, Sask.; Mrs. W. Scott, Winnipeg. There are 47 grandchildren, 68 great-grandchildren living.

Mary died 3 March 1938 at the age of 93 years at her home in Holland. Her funeral was held 8 March 1938 in the United Church at Holland. Her death record gives the cause of death as a cerebral hemorrhage due to arterio-sclerosis.

---------- Obituary ----------

*Holland News, 10 Mar 1938*

**Mary (Palmer) Biglow**

Mrs. Mary Biglow Dies in 94th Year - The death of Mrs. Mary Biglow of Holland, Man. occurred at her home here on Thursday, March 3, in her 94th year. The late Mrs. Biglow was Miss Mary Palmer prior to her marriage and was born June 12, 1844, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Malcolm [sic] Palmer of Port Hope, Ont. She was married to William Henry Biglow in 1864 and they came to Holland district in 1880. They retired from active farming in 1900 and Mr. Biglow died in 1913. Mrs. Biglow is survived by a sister, Mrs. E. Parker of St. Claude, Man. who is hale and hearty at 97, and a brother, Edwin Palmer of Winnipeg; 76, her children, Samuel Biglow, Holland and William, Seattle, Wash; Mrs. W. A. Scott, Winnipeg; Mrs. F. T. Carlton, Cabri, Sask.; and Mrs. H. J. Armstrong, Dubuc, Sask. Besides her five children, she had 47 grandchildren and 89 great-grandchildren. The funeral was held at the United Church, Holland on Tuesday afternoon when Rev. E. Lund conducted an impressive service in the presence of a large number of friends and acquaintances. Interment took place in Brookdale Cemetery.

William and Mary are buried in Brookdale Cemetery at Holland.
Peace
William Henry Biglow
Died Dec 6, 1913
Aged 69 ys, 6 ms
Mary Biglow
1844 – 1938

BIGLOW

36 1852 Canada West census, Hope Twp, Durham County.
37 Death Certificate for William Henry Biglow, d 6 Dec 1913, Holland, Manitoba, official certified copy in possession of author.
38 1901 Manitoba census, Macdonald District, RM South Norfolk.
39 1861 Canada West census, Hope Twp, Durham County.
41 Gravestone of Mary (Palmer) & William Henry Biglow, Brookdale Cemetery, Holland, Manitoba, SW 32-7-11W.
42 Last Will & Testament of William Henry Biglow, probated 7 Jan 1914, Surrogate Court, Central Judicial District, Portage la Prairie, Manitoba, photocopy in possession of author.
43 90th Birthday Announcement for Mary Biglow, Free Press, Winnipeg, Manitoba, 12 Jun 1934.
45 Death Certificate for Mary Biglow, d 3 Mar 1938, Holland, Manitoba, official certified copy in possession of author.
46 Robert Swain Bigelow, Hamilton, Ontario, from the personal records of Edmond Wilson, held in 1995 by Edwin Wilson, Garden Hill, Ontario.
47 The Palmer family is listed on the 1841 England census in the parish of Loxhore, Devon. On the 1852 Canada West census, the birthplace of their two oldest children, Elizabeth and Elias, is given as England, while the birthplace of their next child, Mary, and her younger siblings is shown as Canada.
49 William Henry Biglow filed for a homestead 24 Aug 1880. As well, the Biglow family is shown on the 1881 Manitoba census.
51 Manitoba Homestead Records, Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Winnipeg.
54 Funeral Announcement (notice of funeral card), photocopy in possession of author.