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Old School Museum: The Old School Museum is located next to Parker Hall at 111 West Houston St. in Dayton and is open Saturdays from 10 A.M. to 2 P.M.

Dayton Historical Society: The Society has reconvened its monthly meetings effective June 28, 2021 at Parker Hall at 6 P.M. (the last Monday of each month) for a historical program presented by guest speaker(s). The program is preceded by a Society business meeting and followed by refreshments.

Dayton History News

Aaron Chester Holbrook Sr. 1945 – Dayton Rice Industry History

Long-time Dayton native Aaron Chester Holbrook Sr. is renowned for his involvement in Dayton's rice industry. 1945 was historic for Holbrook and Dayton as evidenced by a series of newspaper articles that year:

Liberty Vindicator – 10 May 1945

Ground breaking for Dayton's new rice drier is set for this weekend, according to Chester Holbrook, who announced several weeks ago that such a project would be undertaken as soon as priorities could be cleared and materials secured.

The drier will be erected in West Dayton near the railroad intersection. No announcement has been made concerning total cost of the new structure, which is intended to serve the Dayton rice growing area.

The Dayton drier is one of many that is being erected in Texas, Louisiana and Arkansas this year. It is reported that approximately 80 plants have been projected in the rice-growing areas of these states at a total cost of \$12,000,000.

Liberty Vindicator – 19 July 1945

Chester Holbrook, builder of the rice drier on the western edge of Dayton, has been approached by rice growers and millers on the matter of enlarging the drying and storage facilities that will be available under the present program.

The present construction on which 20 men are employed calls for an expenditure of well under \$100,000 for drying and storage of rice. If the enlargement suggestions are put into effect, the rice drier and a large bonded warehouse would represent an expenditure of at least \$200,000.

Liberty Vindicator – 26 July 1945

Chester Holbrook of Dayton, contractor, rice farmer and civic leader, was elected Saturday as president of the Houston Division, American Rice Growers Cooperative Association.



**Aaron Chester
Holbrook Sr.
1900-1990
(1945 Photo)**

Since the recent death of L.C. Trousdale of Houston, one of the outstanding figures in the rice industry, Mr. Holbrook has been acting president of the Houston Division.

He was elevated from the vice presidency. The Houston Division is the largest in the national association, including the Dayton, Barbers Hill, Richmond, Sugarland, Pearland and Alvin areas.

Liberty Vindicator – 9 August 1945

Long a civic leader at Dayton, Chester Holbrook recently was named to a position of wider usefulness – president of the Houston Division, American Rice Growers Cooperative Association. – Mr. Holbrook is building a rice drier in his home town that will be ready for use this month.

Liberty Vindicator – 30 August 1945

5 to 20% Loss Sustained by Rice
9.09 Inches of Rain

Despite an overdose of bluster and rainfall, Liberty County suffered comparatively minor damage from the tropical storm that swept out of the Gulf of Mexico Monday. ... Most of the damage was to ripening rice that was flailed by the winds.

Liberty Vindicator – 20 Dec. 1945

Chester Holbrook's rice drier went up just west of the highway intersection, and he is already considering expansion of his rice facilities.

The Holbrook Family Lineage

Mention the name Holbrook to a Daytonite and don't be surprised if they respond with "The street or the family?"

The book The Streets of Dayton, Texas written by Dayton's current mayor Caroline Wadzeck actually lists 3 city streets (Aaron, Chester & Holbrook) named in honor of Daytonite Aaron Chester Holbrook Sr. (1900-1990).

Aaron Sr.'s ancestral legacy in Dayton traces back to at least 1900 after his grandfather and father moved from Kentucky and settled in Dayton. Their names were:

- John Lafayette Holbrook (1845-1932)
- George Lafayette Holbrook (1873-1961)

His grandfather John (Sr.) Lafayette Holbrook (1845-1932) was born 27 August 1845 in Davies County, Kentucky to William Holbrook (1819-?) and Susan Malin (1822-1868).

John Sr. married Virginia Ann (Annie) Cummings (1847-1944) on 10 Sept. 1866 in Henderson County, Kentucky.

They were the parents of 3 sons – John Jr. (1858-1936), William Richard (W.R./Will) (1867-1945) and George Lafayette (1873-1961) – all born in Kentucky.

As of the 1900 Census, John Sr. with wife Annie and their two younger sons William (W.R./Will) and George along with their families were all farmers living in Liberty County Justice Precinct #4 (i.e., Dayton).

The 1900 census also indicates that John Sr. and son William owned their farms while son George and his wife Mary Ann Williams also nicknamed Annie were renting a house but George was employed as a farmer.

The 1910 Census has John Sr. (age 63) and wife Annie (age 62) living in Harris County (Pasadena) with him listed as a "Retired Farmer" who owned his home free and clear.

Surprisingly, the census record from 1920 has John Sr. (age 74) living back in Dayton again – on a farm on "Dayton Houston Road" with his son George, wife Annie and 4 children.

As of the 1930 census, John and Annie are still living with son George and Annie in Dayton – most likely until John's death 2 years later on 26 December 1932 with burial at Crown Hill Cemetery in Pasadena.

As of the 1940 census, George (age 66) had moved to Pasadena and was living at 614 N. Shaver with wife Annie (age 66), mother Annie (age 93) and a grandson named George Noland (age 18). George died 4 April 1961 at age 87.

Will
(left)

George
(right)

mother
Annie
Cummings
Holbrook
(center)



Excerpt – The Streets of Dayton book (by Caroline Wadzeck)

"Holbrook Street is named for Chester and Ellen Holbrook. The street was named in 1962 when Chester developed the Holbrook subdivision on a seventy-four-acre tract of land off North Winfree Street (See Aaron, Chester and Winfree Streets).

Chester liked to say that he was born in Liberty County in 1900 on the prairie west of Dayton under a big Mulberry tree along Wolf Island Road. His parents, George and Annie Holbrook, lived in a house alongside the Mulberry tree then, but later the family moved to Pasadena, where they grew strawberries on a twenty-acre farm. Chester played football for Milby High School in Harrisburg.

In an article in the Liberty Vindicator in 1982, he said that he remembered a game against Central High in Houston at Central, which had a new field that hadn't been marked off with lines. Chester got ahold of the ball and took off running for a touchdown, but since there weren't any lines, he couldn't tell when to stop, so he just kept on running. He said he had run half a mile before they finally caught up to him in a Model T and got him to stop.

Chester had a lifelong interest in flying and at age 82, when the Vindicator article was written, he was still flying, but he liked to have somebody with him. At that time, his grandson, Allan Waldrop, piloted his plane for him, the 3rd one he had owned.

Among his many other occupations, Chester began farming rice in 1920 with Joe Nelson. They plowed with mules in the beginning, doing all the work by hand. Chester married Ellen Elizabeth Nelson in 1922, the daughter of a pioneer Liberty County rice farmer. Ellen moved to Dayton from Iowa with her parents, Carl David and Anna Nelson, when she was 2 years old. She attended Dayton schools, graduating in 1918.

In the Vindicator article, she was asked if she helped with the farming after her marriage, and she said, "My job was to cook for the hands, and that was a job! I cooked the dinners, and we took them out to the field in a wagon pulled by mules. I had to help with it. I didn't go to the field with the dinner all the time, but sometimes I did go."

Granddaughter Mary Ellen Holbrook-Conner said that the entire family gathered every Sunday and holidays at her grandparents' home for dinner. The family was a large one, including Chester and Ellen's six children, A.C. Jr., Bruce, Evelyn Holbrook-Waldrop, Juanita Holbrook-Rizzo, Buddy and John David; their spouses; and all their children.

Mary Ellen said that every Saturday, her grandmother would also go visit her sister Ruth and go to the grocery store. She was a member of the First United Methodist Church.

Ellen Holbrook died on January 31, 1987, and Chester followed on February 21, 1990. They are buried at Magnolia Park Cemetery in Dayton."