

The Ives Family

The first people to live in 97 Charles Street

By Margaret Phillips



THE IVES FAMILY AT NO. 97

The 1881 census states that on the north side of Charles Street there are house numbers up until 53, 97 is one of 12 newly built houses that year.

In 1885, the electoral register had Christopher Ives living at 97. Deeds for the house show it was bought in 1881

From childhood, Christopher (1847-1905) had lived in the St Sepulchre Parish of Northampton, surrounded by shoemakers. At 7 years old, living in Scarletwell Street, his mother, father and six older siblings were involved in the shoe trade (1851 Census) as were most of their neighbours.

By the 1861 census, Christopher is a "Closer" and earning his own living, so he can afford to marry into another shoe trade family in 1866.

Harriett Flack (1846-1911) in 1861 is also a shoemaker and her family live in Grafton Street. Her father, mother and elder brother all work in the trade.

The couple move to Grafton Street, where they start another shoe making brood! By the 1881 census, still living in Grafton Street, and having 6 children to support, Christopher is now the bread winner and working as a Shoe Top Closer.

Shortly after this we find the family at the newly built house at 97 Charles Street, which must have been a great boon for Harriett, looking after such a large family. By 1886, they had three more children!

Using sites that are available publicly online, such as Ancestry, Findmypast, or Google, I continue trying to piece together the history of 97 Charles Street before it was bought by the shoemakers union, NUBSO and then by the Labour Party.

The Daily Reporter, Thursday, May 18, 1882.

In the "WANTEDS" column of the above newspaper there were many advertisements for the Boot and Shoe Trade. On the above date we find

C. Ives of 97 Charles Street wanting good Fitters on Men's Best work.

So this article gives us another hint as to when '97' was first inhabited. It appears the Ives family moved in between 3 April 1881 (Date of the census) and May 1882.

Daughters Florence and Norah were born at No. 97 along with the youngest child in 1886, Alfred.

Was Christopher working from home in the upstairs room, which is perfect for its brightness and number of windows on both sides? Is this why he advertised for fitters to help him at home, until his children were old enough to join him?

In 2004, "Built to Last" was published by English Heritage based on a survey directed by Adam Menuge on the buildings of the Northamptonshire Boot and Shoe Industry, written by Kathryn A Morrison with Ann Bond. It is a fascinating book, with many photos of local shoe industry buildings, but sadly not one of 97 Charles Street. It does explain that when the terraced houses were built for the workers some corner plots were taken advantage of and made with large workshops upstairs at the back and with a separate entrance. (I would like to investigate the building of 97 in order to discover if it was originally built with the large extension at the back.)

Mr Christopher Ives is registered in the 1890 Kelly's directory as a Machine Closer.

By 1891, the census shows us that the Ives family totaled 11. It is fortunate that number 97 is quite roomy as the 9 children were still living at home. Christopher is a Boot Closer and an employer and his four eldest children are all employed in the Boot and Shoe industry - Harriet (21), a shoe trade machinist; Christopher Henry (19), a Clicker; Frank (17), a Laster; and Ellen (15), a machinist. It is not clear whether they all worked for their father or in nearby factories.

Living at 56 Grafton Street in 1871, the Ives had one child. Mrs Ives gave her employment as "Fitter", rather than home duties, but this seems to be the last time we have a record of her doing paid work. Her children stay at school until they are 14 years old, when they choose their career.

By 1901, the census clearly states that Christopher works from home, along with 5 of his children, 4 of whom are in the shoe trade with him and one of his daughters, Norah, is a dressmaker. His youngest son, Alfred, is apprenticed to an Upholsterer.

Sadly, Christopher died on 10 September 1905, leaving his widow effects of £834 14s 2d., which would be worth over £100,000 in the present day (September 2020).

It would seem that the family stayed on at No. 97. On 2 April 1911, Mrs Ives still had 5 adult single children living at home, aged 27 to 41! Harriet, Ellen and Florence were all boot closers and worked from home.

From the 1911 census, we can see that Ellen is named as an employer, whereas her two sisters are workers. You can imagine them receiving the work from another workshop and doing their part to make a pair of shoes, in that lovely bright workshop upstairs at No.97.

The eldest son, Christopher, was a Gas Inspector and the youngest daughter, Norah, was still dressmaking. The census states that they had 7 rooms in the house.

Sadly, a few weeks later, Mrs Harriett Ives died, on 20 April 1911. She left £476 13s 5d to her son, Christopher. Later that same year, her eldest daughter, Harriett died on 22 October at only 42 years old, leaving £82 5s 11d to her brother, Christopher.

After that year, we find marriages for some of the family and so it looks like they went their separate ways without their mother and eldest sister to keep them together.

In the 1913 Electoral Roll there is still a Christopher Ives at No. 97. This must be Christopher Junior, and it states that No 97 is Freehold Land.

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