

A Good and Faithful Servant

A servant's 'character' is her most important possession, as losing it could mean economic ruin. A good servant is clean, celibate, obedient, respectable, hard working, and an early riser.

—Genevieve Leslie, 'Domestic Service in Canada'

Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

—Matthew 25:21

While the Lanes rose through the social circles in Brandon, Hilda Blake made her solitary way—probably since the age of 12 or 13—as a domestic servant. According to Joseph Singer, she lived for less than a year at a farm north of Elkhorn, spent the next seven or eight years in Winnipeg, and then in 1897 or 1898 came to Brandon.¹ Other evidence, however, suggests that while she certainly worked as a domestic in Winnipeg,² she came to the 'Garden of the Lord' earlier: she had been employed at 'points west', including Aikenside (near Chater) where she worked for Robert and Mary Crozier,³ and then at Brandon for Mrs Frank Merritt, a member of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union; and for Mary Lane's friend, Charles Adams, the leather and harness merchant who had been an alderman, mayor of Brandon, and Liberal MPP but who by 1899 was spending much of his time in Toronto, where his wife lived.⁴