All in the Title Family

Description

An Interview with Michael Holden

by Julie Ann Rutledge, VCTE

How long has your family been in the industry?
My family started in the title industry in 1920 when my grandfather took a job as an apprentice working for the Title Insurance Corporation of St. Louis. My father started working for my grandfather in 1946 upon his return from WWII and I started working in the business in 1989 after graduating from high school. 2018 will mark my familyâ??s 98th year in the business.

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What roles have they played in the industry?
My extended family, including 2 aunts, an uncle, 3 cousins, 2 sisters, my mother, father, grandfather, and step-son have all worked the industry during the past 98 years. All have worked for title agencies and myself and my father have worked for underwriter companies.

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How did you decide to work in the industry?
My decision to work in the industry was very simple â?? I had started college in the fall of 1989 and was working at a restaurant delivering pizza. Pay was good, but the hours were not desirable. I was working most all Friday and Saturday nights and not getting to enjoy the â??College experienceâ?• with my friends. So when my parents offered a job at the title company with Monday to Friday afternoon hours and nights and weekends off, I jumped at the chance. I have loved the industry every since.

How do you think you benefit from having a title-family?
Not only am I a title family, but I am my fatherâ??s only son and my motherâ??s only child. Both my parents worked in the industry, so vacations were often attending title conventions and discussions around the dinner table was always about title stuff. Some people spend years working to learn our business, I was so inundated with title that it was all around me. It was hard not to pick up all the information that I had available to me.

Would you recommend the industry to young professionals? Why?
I would specifically recommend the business to young professionals because it is an industry that does not require a college degree to enter and can be very lucrative. Beyond the Monday to Friday working hours and the professional setting (no carrying trays of food), it is a well-respected profession. My grandfather used to always say â?? title professionals, barbers and undertakers â?? the United States will always need all three and you will always have employment in those professions.

Are there any interesting stories in the family?



McCune Gill (1883-1965)

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As a title man growing up in Missouri, I have been familiar with the name McCune Gill all my working life. Mr. Gill had a tremendous influence on my family, the title insurance business and the real estate industry at large. Any title person from St. Louis surely recognizes the name McCune Gill as the author of the seminal book regarding real estate title research *â??Gill on Missouri Titlesâ?•*. Born in Audrain County Missouri on March 20, 1883, McCune graduated from High School and began working for the Lincoln Trust Company around the turn of the 20th century.

The Lincoln Trust Company had been organized only a decade before in 1894. Lincoln Trust Co. was a growing real estate title firm that conducted real estate closings, financing and other real estate activities. In 1898, the company commissioned the construction of the Lincoln Trust Company building at the corner of Chestnut and 7th street in downtown St. Louis. The building became a fixture on what was known as â??real estate rowâ?• in St. Louis, which covered Chestnut Street from 6th to 12th streets.



Lincoln Trust Building

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But Mr. Gillâ??s first foray into real estate titles was short as he obtained a leave of absence to study for a law degree from the Washington University. Returning to Lincoln Trust Co. after graduation from law school, McCune Gill began a prolific career as a title man, noted historian and author. He rose through the ranks of the Lincoln Trust Company, which changed its name to the Title Insurance Corporation of St. Louis in 1927. He eventually became the companyâ??s President and Chairman of the Board before his death in 1965.

In 1920, my family entered Mr. Gillâ??s story, when McCune took a chance on a 19 year old apprentice named Morris Sidney Holden (my grandfather). My grandfather â??Moâ?• as he was known considered Mr. Gill his greatest mentor in the title business. After spending 17 years working for Mr. Gill, my grandfather set out with two partners to start his own title agency.

In 1936, at age 53, McCune Gill added another accomplishment to his resume, serving as the President of the American Title Association (later becoming the American Land Title Association or ALTA). Mr. Gill contributed mightily to ALTA in its early years, writing many articles published in the Title News. In 1925 Mr. Gill was a keynote speaker to the annual convention and his session was listed in the Title News for August 1925 as â??this will be one of the interesting and valuable talks of the convention.â?•

McCune Gill authored many books on real estate law. But his passions did not end with land title law and court cases, he also served as a trustee for the Missouri Historical Society, President of the St. Louis Mortgage Bankers Association and as a director of the Mortgage Bankers Association of America.

McCune Gill died June 4th, 1965. The company he helped bring into the 20th century, Title Insurance Corporation of St. Louis was part of an anti-trust law suit in 1968 against Chicago Title and Trust Company. That suit ended with a consent decree wherein Chicago was required to divest its minority ownership in Title Insurance Co. of St. Louis. The company eventually partnered with First American Title Insurance Company and was merged into First American Title Insurance Company of the Mid-West in 1991.

My family would not be in the title business if it had not been for Mr. Gill, a man I never met but respected all my life. Had he not taken a chance on my grandfather in 1920, my family may have never entered the title business.

â??**There are no uninsurable properties in the United States, just unacceptable exceptions**â?• â?? attributed to Morris Sidney Holden (1901-1976), former apprentice and employee of McCune Gill.

100+ Years of Title Insurance

Holden Family (3 generations) in the Land Title Business. 1920 to present.



Morris S. Holden (circa 1930)
1901-1977



Sidney K. Holden (circa 1955)
1925-

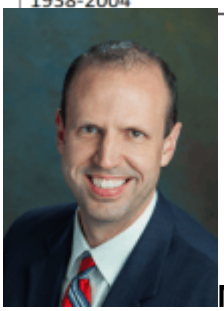


Sandra S. Massey Holden (circa 1985)
1938-2004



Michael A. Holden (circa 2000)
1970-

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