

property. In December 1903 Mary Caughell, wife of Thomas, purchased the property from Walker and she in turn sold the said property to Mr. Harry Norman and his wife, Alice Adelia (Marlatt) Norman the grandparents of the present owner, in the year of 1906.

One of the first improvements after acquisition of the farm was to raise the house and put a cement and brick foundation under it. A full basement was dug at this time. Three barns originally standing west of the house and close to the road were moved to the present location and joined together to form the present structure.

With the passing of Mr. Harry Norman in May 1925, his wife Adelia resold the farm to her son Ralph Leslie and his wife Maybelle (Tansley) Norman in 1926. Three sons namely, Harry Arthur, Robert Leonard, and James Howard comprised the family.

In the year 1927, a well was drilled to supply a source of water for the house as well as the livestock in the outer buildings. Erection of a new silo was made in 1928.

By 1932 additional crop land was needed and most of the remaining timber was cleared enlarging the area under cultivation by a third. With the installation of hydro in 1935, water was brought under pressure to the house and barns, and in 1957 with the installation of a furnace in the house, much of the hard work and time consuming chores were eliminated.

In June of 1959 Ralph Norman passed away and the farm was passed on to his son Robert Leonard and his wife Mable Irene (Zavits) Norman who are the present owners (1975).

During the present period Leonard and Irene have made many improvements and alterations to preserve and ensure that the house, which

is now 126 years old is maintained in as good a condition as possible.
In 1965 two sun porches were added and the exterior was covered with
white aluminum siding.



NORMAN FARM HOUSE

ROBERT LEONARD NORMAN





ROBERT LEONARD NORMAN

*Melina Bill
72 Park Ave*

LIVED FOR SEVENTY TWO YEARS ON THE EDGEWARE ROAD, YARMOUTH

Mathew Gilbert Now Eighty-two Years of Age—Has Spent More Than Allotted Span on One Farm.

To live for a period of seventy two years in one home is a record for which very few residents of the Western Ontario peninsula can boast, yet this is the case of Mr. Mathew Gilbert, who lives on the Edgeware road, on the corner of the sideroad about a mile and a half immediately north of Yarmouth Centre, and who is the uncle of Messrs. M. A. Gilbert, manager of the Imperial Bank, and Richard Gilbert, of the Erie Mills, this city.

Mr. Gilbert was born at Holdsworth, Devonshire, England, on the 22nd of January, 1822, and thus would be 82 years of age on the 22nd of next month.

At the age of ten years with his parents, he came to Canada, sailing from Bittiford, Bristol Channel, on April 12th, 1831.

With them came three other families, all of whom settled in the County of Elgin, in the neighborhood of Mr. Gilbert.

The party consisted of the following:

Mr. and Mrs. Richard Gilbert and five sons; Richard, John, William, Matthew and Marwood, all of whom are deceased with the exception of Matthew.

Duncan Westlake, and wife, two sons and one daughter, the latter of whom is still living in the person of Mrs. Edward Miller, who resides on the corner of St. George and Curtis streets, this city.

Richard Penhale and wife, four sons and two daughters. Thomas Penhale, the third son, still lives on the old homestead, next that of Mr. Gilbert. The daughters are Mrs. Andrew Miller, North Yarmouth, and Mrs. Jas. Cole, city.

Richard Andrew and wife had son John, the latter of whom (recently deceased) was the father of Mrs. A. M. Hutchison.

The party, who had no particular destiny, sailed in a lumber vessel being six weeks in crossing the Atlantic. Steamships were unknown at this time.

The vessel on which they sailed came up the Bay of Fundy in a dense fog and landed during the latter part of May, 1831, at St. Andrews, N.B.

The stay here was a short one sailing again to Eastport, Maine, where they remained ten days. After this they again embarked for New York.

Mr. Gilbert states that he clearly recalls an incident in connection with this trip, that might have proved more serious. As they were approaching New York by night,

Long Island Sound, their vessel struck on Hellgate Rock, where it remained fast for three or four hours. Fortunately little damage was done and the vessel proceeded on its course.

The party remained but three days in New York, proceeding to Bethany, Pa., but having received a bad account of the locality, determined to push on to Ohio. The trip was made by way of the Hudson River to Albany where they saw a steamboat for the first time, embarking on it to their destination. Arriving at Albany, where they remained ten days, they proceeded by way of the Erie Canal to Buffalo, intending to settle in Ohio State, near what is at present Cleveland.

Here an incident occurred that changed their entire plans and one that probably had a great deal to do with the settling of many of the Devonshire people in after years into Canada that might otherwise have made the United States their home.

Their baggage all being placed on the wharf on Canal street in Buffalo, ready to be conveyed to Ohio, succeeded to attract the attention of a hotelkeeper of this city (then a village) by the name of George Miller, who kept a frame tavern near the site of the old Lisgar House, since razed to the ground.

Miller approached the party, asked

them where they were going, and on being informed, asked them why not settle in Canada, and remain under the British Government.

Mr. Gilbert, though at this time but ten years of age, became deeply interested in all the plans made, and listened with much attention to Miller's proposal.

In reply to Miller, Gilbert's father stated that he had heard that "it was so cold in Canada as to make it necessary to shoe the geese in order to keep them warm."

Miller prevailed on them, however, to cross into Canada, and engaged a schooner to convey them to Port Stanley, at which place they arrived on the following morning.

The captain of the schooner was, as he was familiarly termed "Old Capt. Scott," who died recently at Port Burwell.

Arriving at Port Stanley, Mr. Gilbert's father said to Miller, "Where's the town?"

"There," said Miller, pointing to an old warehouse on the bank of Kettle Creek, and to an old tavern

approaching New York by night, where they were

kept by a Mrs. Witcomb, which had an open shed in connection, to which latter place the baggage was transferred.

The little company were deeply incensed with Miller at first for bringing them to Port Stanley, believing that he was conducting them to an inhabited place.

Next day Messrs. Gilbert and Westlake proceeded down the lake shore to Port Talbot, to see Col. Talbot with reference to taking up land. The Colonel received them cordially, and remarked that they were the kind of men he desired to settle the country.

Mr. Gilbert was allotted the 400 acres where his son Matthew (the subject of our sketch) still resides, 275 acres of which still composes the farm, 225 of which Mr. Gilbert continues to work.

Mr. Westlake was allotted 200

acres, immediately adjoining that of Mr. Gilbert. Thus it was that of the vast number of Devonshire people who have settled in the county adjacent to this city, that this party was the first to arrive.

The work of clearing the forest, and erecting their homes commenced at once, the labors of which none but the old pioneers know.

Their first home consisted of logs, covered with elm bark, this in time, giving place to more habitable surroundings, until at the present time the homes are very few and far, between that excell in grandeur and beauty, that of Mr. Gilbert's.

The large two story white brick house stands in the centre of a two-acre enclosure that is a veritable park, well-kept spruces and cedars being everywhere in evidence. The whole surroundings have a look of peace and plenty that goes to make the life of an Elgin farmer an enviable one.

Penhale and Andrews separated at Port Stanley with their former friends, the former taking up the blacksmithing business in the city, while the latter, who was a well educated man, and afterwards a Baptist preacher, took to school teaching, teaching the first grammar school ever held in the then little town of St. Thomas. He was a particularly clever man of his times, being master of seven languages. Some time after this he took to farming, a grandson, Richard Andrew, still living on the old homestead on the Edgeware Road.

In the following year to that of these early settlers' arrival, 1832, a great number of their former friends in Devonshire, were induced to come over to Canada, all of whom settled in this neighborhood until the land was all taken up, and then spreading out through Middlesex, and on to Exeter, at which place so many settled that they named the town after its old namesake in Devonshire.

Mr. Gilbert is full of reminiscences of the early thirties. It was about this time that his oldest brother, Richard, with a Charles Freeman, went to St. Joseph, on Lake Michigan, and assisted to build the first piers at the mouth of the Chicago Creek, then Fort Dearborn, Chicago not having an existence at that time.

When the rebellion of 1837 broke out, the two walked to Detroit, a distance of 285 miles, for the purpose of taking up arms for the mother country, but on arriving there found such a formidable array of rebels there that they feared to cross the lines, and walked back to Chicago.

Mr. Gilbert who was at this time 16 years of age, was drafted, and served a month at Port Stanley, but his father objected to his enlistment and went as his substitute, stating that he thought possibly the youngster might learn some bad habits, but Mr. Gilbert thinks that his father was anxious to go on account of an old friend of his, Col. Nevills, being in charge of the Port Stanley district.

The rebels around St. Thomas, of whom Mr. Gilbert says there were not a few, captured his friend Westlake and carried him away, but the latter succeeded a short time afterwards in escaping.

It was not long after this that Mr. Gilbert's brother, Richard, who had again returned from Chicago, was out riding with a friend near the first overhead bridge, just east of the city limits, that he was thrown from his horse, struck on his head breaking a blood-vessel, and died soon afterwards.

On February 26th, 1846, Mr. Gilbert married Jane Campbell, sister of Lachlan Campbell, high constable of Elgin, by whom three children were born—Mrs. M. Sherk, who resides on St. George street, in this city; John A., whose death took place three years ago, and Mrs. (Rev.) R. W. Ballah, who, with Mr. Ballah live on the old homestead. Mrs. Ballah was a graduate of Alma College of the class of '87.

Mrs. Gilbert's death took place on April 20th, 1897, their married life having extended over a period of 51 years.

Mr. Gilbert is a well read man, and has given much of his time to public interests.

He served as councillor for a number of years, having been first elected in 1859. In 1860-61 he was reeve of the township of Yarnouth.

Mr. Gilbert is still a magistrate of the county, having filled the position continuously since '61.

Though 82 years of age Mr. Gilbert is an exceedingly active man, and to use his own words "can do as good a day's work as ever he could.

His mind and faculties are bright and keen. His hearing is not in the least affected with years and the outlook for his living a good many years are as bright with him as with some many years his junior.



BARN COLLAPSED — Norman Dakins of RR 5, St. Thomas, heard a big “ka-boom”, Thursday morning and this collapsed barn is what he found minutes later. The barn was owned by George Helmer of RR 2, St. Thomas. Mr. Dakins said the building was destroyed soon after the winds arose. (T-J Staff Photo).



ANIMALS SURVIVE — It was Thursday at noon, said Kim Flintoft of RR 2, St. Thomas. Four horses survived the crash and were still housed in the barn at the time the picture was taken Saturday afternoon. (Stories on Page 9) (T-J Staff Photo).

CONSTITUTION BY LAWS & RULES OF ORDER
OF THE LITERARY SOCIETY
OF
YARMOUTH CENTRE, AS REVISED AND
ADOPTED BY THE SOCIETY.
NOVEMBER 20TH 1886
AND READOPTED BY THE SECOND SOCIETY.
1905

We the people of Yarmouth Centre, and surrounding country, having associated ourselves together for the purpose of literary, musical and scientific improvement, do here by adopt the following constitution, By Laws and Rules of Order.

"Constitution"

- ARTICLE 1 This Society shall be known as the Yarmouth Centre Literary Society.
- ARTICLE 2 The object of this Society shall be the cultivation of Literature, Science, Music and Oratory.
- ARTICLE 3 This Society shall consist of members only who shall have been approved by the Society.
- ARTICLE 4 Any person desiring to unite with the Society can do so by making application to any member of the Society.
- ARTICLE 5 It shall be the duty of any member of the Society when application is made to him or her to unite with the Society by any person desiring to become a member to bring the application before the first regular meeting.
- ARTICLE 6 No person shall be considered a member until accepted by a two thirds majority of members present at the regular meeting.