

Donald Ferguson was a man of rather stocky build. Inured as he was to Highland hardships, the stories of his endurance were almost legendary among the older people, and no one gave him special commendation. He was strong and able, and did no more than could be expected of him.

To recall a few incidents: In the winter of the hard year, after gathering up every bit of food for the family, he walked to Montreal to work on the docks under construction there, to make "cash money." And his crossing of the Niagara River from Black Rock (Buffalo) to Fort Erie is an epic of the frontier. That winter, he worked in the brick yards at Buffalo and had saved \$40.00 in gold, now secreted in his money belt. He overheard some ruffians planning to kill him for his money. Pursued by the mob in the brickyard, he escaped to the river. He plunged in. Ice cakes dotted the water. The current of the Niagara there is very strong. He had heavy boots. He managed to keep afloat.

A woman on the Fort Erie side thought she saw a black dog in the river. It was Donald Ferguson's head. She helped him out with a pole, and wrapped him in blankets in her cabin, and next day when he left to walk home, she would accept no money for her hospitality.

Since Donald Ferguson married late in life and had "A competence" in his early thirties, very few such in pioneer times, and since he worked hard with his sons too, all his life, there were rumors that he was a very rich man. When he died the walking reporter wrote up Donald Ferguson in the local press as "Millionaire Dan'l". - This reporter, a member of a fine Dorchester family was crestfallen to learn later that his suppositions on Donald Ferguson's huge estate were extremely amiss, especially since some of Donald Ferguson's hard earned estate was distributed already amongst a fair number of people.

The churchyard corner of Kilmartin, Concession 11, North Yarmouth, was cleared by Donald Ferguson. The corner had a stand of heavy elm. The land was donated by the Douglas family.

Donald Ferguson was an expert axe-man and elm was one of the most difficult woods to handle. This work may have been a contribution from the large family of which he was a member. He had no wife as yet to be fearful alone in the log cabin at home. He did not marry young.

When the churchyard was cleared, the Blacks, his cousins, as a mark of appreciation, gave him a personal gift of three little pigs which he carried in a sack to his home on Concession 12 West, about four miles away. That was considered a princely gift in the 1830's.

Kilmartin Church, the place of worship, was reached for many a day from Ferndale, by a forest path and a ford across Kettle Creek in the Patterson Valley. The parents carried the little ones, in turns.

Numerous other settlers in this district of North Yarmouth came also from Argyle, Scotland (the first being James Campbell in 1830). So, these people in their new homes in Upper Canada named the Church Kilmartin after their old parish church in Argyle, Scotland, where many Fergusons lie buried.

To-day North Yarmouth is part of the banner County of Elgin. These worthy Scottish pioneers in their lifetime hewed homes from out of the wilderness. The soil of Elgin County gave them bread.

And now, in fair exchange they have given themselves to it, in turn, in death.

As CARLYLE writes, "The Land is Mother to us all. It belongs to the Almighty God: and to all His children of men that have ever worked well on it, or that shall ever work well on it."

Elgin County is its own testimonial to the pioneers, two thirds of whom were of Scottish descent.

1959. Hattie Ferguson Shaw

1966 -----

Lot 5, Concession 12, North Yarmouth, known as the Daniel Ferguson homestead, was purchased by Donald Ferguson in 1837. General farming was carried on by his son Archibald D Ferguson, until 1920, when it was sold to Norman Watson, whose son Murray Watson now owns it.

THE GILBERT FAMILY

Richard Gilbert was one of a family of 6 - 3 boys and 3 girls, children of John Gilbert of Holdsworthy, Devonshire, England. Holdsworthy is an obscure but ancient little market town, so old in fact that it was mentioned in the Domesday Book which was compiled for William the Conqueror. It is so old that it was a centre for Christianity in the days of the Roman occupation. A visitor to the town to-day would see, upon the mossy tombstones, surrounding the village church, many familiar Yarmouth Township names:- Cole, Penhale, Curtis, Gilbert, Westlake, Marlatt, Maynard, Mills, Pincombe, Haydon, Paddon, Shepherd, Yeo, Yeandle, Taylor and many others.

The story of the migration of all of these to Yarmouth was a fascinating one. Richard Gilbert was born near the end of the eighteenth century when England was bearing the ruinous burdens of the Napoleonic Wars and he grew up on the home-
stead of "Rhude" to marry Martha Andrews who bore him five sons, Richard, John, William, Mathew and Marwood who was fifteen months old at the time of their exodus from the old land. William, my grandfather, was the third son and a boy of eleven years at the time.

In April 1831, Richard and Martha joined their resources with those of three other families to charter, for a passage to North America, the wooden sailing vessel the Calypso. The party comprised beside the seven Gilberts and their hired man, the Westlakes, Penhales and Andrews. The Westlake family was made up of Simon Westlake, his wife, two sons - George and Edmund and one daughter Mary Ann, later Mrs. E. Miller. In the Penhale family there were Richard Penhale, his wife, three sons - Thomas, Mathew and John and two daughters, later Mrs. A. Miller and Mrs. James Cole. The Andrews family was comprised of Richard Andrews, his wife and one son John. The party sailed from Beddeford, Bay of Bristol, April 12th, 1831.

Knowing little of the continent for which they were bound they had prepared a cargo of equipment, tools, utensils, clothing and food for a voyage of unknown duration. Mrs. Gilbert had provided herself with twenty new dresses as she meant to be well dressed for the rest of her life no matter what befall! They also had cheeses, an indication of the general food provisions. Richard, who had sold out his holdings, carried capital of \$3500, half of it in silver coins, packed in a "French" basket the size of a pail. The other families carried their cash assets in a similar fashion.

For eight weeks the Calypso battled the Atlantic and then nosed up the Bay of Fundy. They set foot on the new land at St. Andrews, New Brunswick. The countryside was not pleasing to them and after taking on fresh water they put to sea again. They touched land again in Eastport, Maine, where their sojourn of a week offered nothing tempting enough to detain them. Thence they sailed for New York. In Long Island Sound the Calypso struck Hellgate Rock and was stranded for several anxious hours. No serious damage being done the vessel proceeded and finally sailed into New York harbour. What pleasure they might have had in New York was dissipated by the discovery that the customs duties of that port were so high that they could not afford to bring ashore all their cargo so much of their gear was dumped into the sea. After that, it was no part of their intention to give the State of New York the benefits of their baskets of silver and they promptly left for Bethany where they saw the first steamboat of their experience and travelled on it to Albany from whence they

travelled on the Erie Canal by tow-boat to Buffalo, a distance of around three hundred miles. They intended to push on from Buffalo into Ohio.

At Buffalo they chanced to put up at a tavern kept by a man named Miller, who was of a large connection of that name harshly ejected from their eastern locations because of their loyalist sentiments in the American Revolution and relocated along the Canadian side of the Niagara River near Fort Erie. Although Miller did business in Buffalo he was strongly attached to Ontario and he now argued with the travellers from Devon. "Why not go into Canada and stay under the British Flag?" Miller's advice prevailed and he engaged the schooner "Niagara" under Captain Scott to take the party to Port Stanley where they arrived late in June. At Port Stanley they were dismayed to find only a ware0 house and a tavern kept by a Mrs. Whitcombe.

The next day Gilbert and Westlake set out on foot to follow the blazed trail to Port Talbot to interview Colonel Talbot about land on which to locate. From the Colonel, Grandfather purchased lots 12 and 13 south and lot 12 on the first R.N.E.R. which then was a mere trail indicated by blazes. The price was 12 shillings, 2 pence per acre or a total of 187 pounds 10 pence in all. In 1835 lot 13 first R.N.E.R. was bought at the same price. The receipt for the first purchase and a like receipt from Burwell for the later purchase are still at hand. The Crown deed for the first purchase of 300 acres is in the hands of the present owner of lot 12 first R.N.E.R., Jack Gilbert. The old deed for lot 13 first R.N.E.R. is among our old papers with the receipts.

At Port Stanley, Mr. Penhale opened a blacksmith shop but later he took up land on the Edgeware Rd. Some of us remember the sturdy mud house of Thomas Penhale which was destroyed by fire some years past.

Mr. Andrews who was a well educated man and a Baptist preacher found employment in the first grammar school in St. Thomas. It was said he was master of seven languages.

The Gilbert and Westlake families travelled by wagon through almost unbroken forest to St. Thomas which at that time boasted of three stores, two hotels and a blacksmith shop. The women and children were left in St. Thomas with the Widdifields who lived on the Thompson property where Kain St. now is located. The men proceeded to their holdings and built log shanties, our first home was erected on Jack Gilberts farm and little Dianne is the sixth generation of our family to live on that corner. By dint of much hard labor in felling the magnificent trees and burning them, four acres were cleared and put into wheat that fall.

The new settlers began to write home glowing accounts of their adventure and although a few immigrants from Devon had located in the Talbot settlement earlier in the century, as an outcome of this particular party settling together on the Edgeware Rd. there followed the next ten years a migration from Holdsworthy such that almost every family name in the ancient records now began to appear in Yarmouth. C.O. Ermatinger in the "The Talbot Regime" says that Yarmouth enjoyed a period of unusual prosperity and tranquillity and that by 1840 there were 23,000 acres of land under cultivation, many established orchards, 10 saw mills and five grist mills.

Soon after their settlement here their worst fright had been from the appearance of a Highland Scot family of McIntyres who paused at the Gilbert farm one night en route to their location in North Yarmouth with a request for hospitality. The McIntyres, ancestors of D.J, Catharine and Ethel spoke Gaelic so no communication by language was possible to the Devon folk and they appeared altogether strange and foreign. They were offered and accepted shelter in a new sheep house which was just being completed. Bedded deep in clean pea straw it offered the newcomers a resting place which no doubt was welcome.

In 1856 William Gilbert married Elizabeth Tansley of York who had been born aboard an emigrant ship in New York harbor in 1826. Their two children, John and Elizabeth (later Mrs. James H. Westlake) were husky teenagers in the years when the twin houses were built on the two corners in 1872. John Gilbert was born in June 1857 on what is now Jack Gilbert's farm but in September William with his family moved into their new home on lot 13, it being the back portion of the present house on the Julien Martin farm.

Richard had often dreamed of re-creating his Devon home here and no doubt often talked of it to his boys. But when 'Rhude' was eventually imitated, it was twins, for Mathew on the south west corner and William on the north east each built identical houses. A contractor named Auckland was engaged, a certain rivalry developed and while the houses were almost alike William's came out 2' larger each way. Mathew however, pre-empted the name 'Rhude'.

No pains or expense were spared in making the new homes beautiful and permanent. Dressed and carved stone for the round-headed arches, over the windows and main doors with carved keystones and corbels, was imported from Kingston. The brick for the solid brick walls came from St. Marys. Stained glass fan lights with the date of construction was placed over the front entrance doors while inside were the distinctive circular walnut stairways. One particularly beautiful feature was the carved medallions showing lions heads in bas-relief above the doors in both upper and lower halls.

By reason of the wealth of seasoned woods which the family had accumulated from their own farms the interiors were probably more richly done than in the Devon ancestor. The countryside was scoured for the finest craftsmen to convert the choice walnut, oak, pine and bird's eye maple into beautiful wainscote, heavily panelled doors and door and window casings.

Finally when the houses were completed an expert cabinet maker and his apprentices worked for weeks to make suitable furniture. These men applied their skills to cut and carve and mortise out of the walnut lumber huge ornate sideboards, extension tables, dressers, chests, bedsteads, commodes and centre tables.

Richard and Martha Gilbert and their two eldest sons and their families sleep in the family plot in old St. Thomas Church Cemetery on Walnut St. The other three sons William, Mathew and Marwood lie in adjoining lots in St. Thomas Cemetery

Ina Gilbert Gloin.
(Mrs. C. A. Gloin).

May 10, 1952.

GILBERT ---

1966 ---

The 400 Acres on the Edgeware Road settled on in 1831, by Richard Gilbert is now owned by John VanPatter, sons Robert and Ray on the south-west and south east corners. Julian Martin on the north-east corner, while the 100 acres on the north-west corner owned by Jack Gilbert (a great grandson of William) who passed away in 1961, was sold to Charles Goodhue in 1965. The only direct descendant living on these farms now is William Gilbert's great granddaughter, Betty and husband, George Elms and family, living on a corner lot of the Ray VanPatter farm.



Mr. and Mrs. William Gilbert and their two children
Elizabeth and John, 1868



Home built by Mr. William Gilbert 1872; the rear section
of house completed in 1857.

BARN RAISING IN YARMOUTH

A massive structure costing \$3,000, erected on Mr. Matthew Gilberts' farm, now owned by Mr. Robert Van Patter.

One of those unique gatherings, the pride of the country side, where the sturdy yeomen gather from miles around, took place at Squire Matthew Gilberts' farm, lots 11 and 12 on the Edgeware road Yarmouth, on Thursday, July 7, 1904. The occasion was a barn raising, and some idea may be had of its importance when the writer actually counted 160 men engaged in the work--and such splendid specimens of men, too--sturdy and strong, worthy descendants of the pioneers who settled the township.

There were the Fergusons, Campbells, Taylors, McIntyres, Lewis, Tibbets, Bakers and McLarty's of North Yarmouth,--the Penhales, Archibalds, Millers, Paddons, Gilberts, Hatches, and Westlakes of the Edgeware Road, the Heydons, Hughes, Couses, Evelys, Geo. Gilberts, Normans, Gilletts, Allans, Smalls, and Russes of South Yarmouth, besides others from Dorchester, Southwold and Malahide.

It may be safely surmised that many came to compliment the Squire, who is indeed a wonderful man for where will you find a farmer at the ripe old age of 83 with enterprise enough to erect a modern barn? Colonel Talbot said when granting the 400 acres to the Squire's father, that he wanted Canada settled with such men and time has proved the wisdom of the Colonel's judgment by the ideal farms and comfortable surroundings which are to be seen in Yarmouth.