

## THE FOUNDATIONS OF NORTH YARMOUTH

- established in 1807: "Broadcloth \$20.00 per yard; printed cottons, \$1.00; steam loom cottons, \$1.00; brass buttons, a York Shilling each; pins 50¢ a paper; green tea, \$2.00 per lb., tobacco, \$1.00; nutmegs 25¢ each; board nails, 25¢ per lb., shingle nails, 30¢; 7x9 glass, 25¢; and every other article in proportion." "During the war nearly all the settlers had to go to Port Ryerse for their salt, pay \$12.00 a bushel for it and carry it home on their backs. In the winter of 1813 I went to Long Point and paid \$6.00 for 28 pounds, a neighbour offered to take it home in his sleigh. He stayed overnight on the road, and left his load exposed, so that a cow destroyed the salt, killed herself, and caused me to return to replace the loss. This necessitated two hundred miles of travel on foot, and \$12.00 in cash to realize 28 pounds of salt. During an unusual scarcity a peddler came with a horse load. I took fourteen pounds for which I paid \$8.00. Two of my neighbours, David Brush and Moses Rice, went to Hamilton and paid \$75.00 for a barrel, and, allowing for their time, expenses and team, it cost them \$100.00. But, a few days after, peace was proclaimed, and in a short time salt could be had at Port Ryerse for \$12.00 a barrel."

Early pioneers along the Edgeware Road settled prior to 1840 were: Peter Ferguson, Joseph Eastabrooke Sr., George Miller, Daniel Mann, Richard Penhale, Richard Gilbert, Simon and Edmund Westlake, John Marlatt, Benjamin Secord, Edward Teeple, William Shore, James Dodd, Patrick Bobier, Edward Swiney, John Black, William Luton, John McTaggart, John Littell, Wm. B. Teeple. Several of these settlers lived to a ripe old age and many of their descendants are today residents of North Yarmouth - some on the Edgeware Road.

Earliest settlers on the 10th concession were John Learn (1821) and Isaac Collver (1825). Then came Hugh Douglass, John Campbell, the Taylors, Bakers, McLartys, Calcutts, Curtis, Cranes, Lockes, etc.

Along the 11th - first settled in the 1840's were: Fergusons, Lockes, House, Black, Sinclair, Jones.

Along the 12th - McIntyre, Ferguson, Fowler, Campbell.

Along the 13th - Curtis, McInnes, Thompson, McCall and McKellar.

No patents to settlers had been issued along the 14th and 15th concessions by 1850.

A talk given by Donald C. Cosens at a meeting of the North Yarmouth W.I.,  
Nov. 20, 1969, and to the members of the North Yarmouth District  
Historical Association, Feb. 8, 1970.

# PIONEER SETTLEMENT

## NORTH YARMOUTH TOWNSHIP

1831

The history of the settlement of Yarmouth Township covers three periods and comprises three portions of the township--the centre, the south and the north.

The settlement along the Talbot Road began about 1810, the settlement by the Quakers (or Friends) in the south after 1813, and much later, the settlement by the Gilbert and Westlake families on the Edgeware Road and the coming of the Scotch Highlanders to the north of the township after 1831. It is with this latter part, the settlement of North Yarmouth, with which this history will be concerned.

### THE DEVONSHIRE SETTLEMENT ON THE EDGEWARE ROAD

The pioneers who settled along the Edgeware Road and on the tenth concession, came mostly from Holdsworthy, an obscure but ancient little market town in Devon--so ancient that not merely was it listed as an established village in the Domesday Book compiled for William the Conqueror, but it was a centre of Christianity in the days of the Roman occupation of Britain. In the churchyard surrounding the present impressive church a visitor from Yarmouth might be startled to read upon the mossy tombstones many familiar names: Cole, Gloin, Gilbert, Penhale, Marlatt, Westlake, Maynard, Mills, Pincombe, Sanders, Shepherd, Paddon, Hayden, Taylor, Yeo, Yeandle, Curtis, Duncombe, and a score or so more.

The migration of all these to Yarmouth was a fascinating accident.

Richard Gilbert was born to one of the Devon Gilberts near the end of the 18th century, when England was bearing the ruinous economic burdens of the Napoleonic Wars; and he grew up on the yeoman homestead of "Rhude" to marry a Martha Andrews, who bore him five sons. The eldest, Richard, was born in 1819 and the youngest, Marwood, was born in 1829. These were the years when England wrestled with social problems culminating in the Reforms of 1837. But before that time, Richard and Martha in April 1831, joined their resources with those of several friends to charter the wooden sailing vessel, the Calypso, for a passage to North America.

The party comprised the Gilberts and their sons--Richard, William, John, Matthew and Marwood; Richard Penhale, his wife and three sons--Thomas, Matthew and John, and two daughters (later Mrs. A. Miller and Mrs. James Cole); Simon Westlake, his wife and two sons--George and Edmund, and one daughter (later Mrs. E. Miller); and Richard Andrews and his wife and son--John.

They sailed from Biddeford, Bay of Bristol, April 18, 1831.

Knowing little of the continent for which they were bound, they had prepared a cargo of equipment, tools, utensils and clothing for a voyage of unknown duration. Mrs. Gilbert industriously provided herself with twenty new dresses--she meant to be well dressed for the rest of her life whatever might befall! She also shipped thirty cheeses--an indication of the scale of the general food provisions. Richard, who had sold out Rhude, carried capital of \$3500.00, half of it in silver coin, packed in a "French basket the size of a pail." The other families carried their cash assets in similar fashion.

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For eight weeks the Calypso battled the Atlantic, and then in June 1831 nosed up the Bay of Fundy in a dense fog, and landed at St. Andrews, N.B. After taking on fresh water, they put to sea again, and touched land at Eastport, Maine. After ten days they sailed on to New York. In Long Island Sound the Calypso struck Hell-gate Rock and was stranded for several anxious hours, a misadventure which determined their final landing in that port.

What pleasure they might have had in the State of New York in 1831 was dissipated by the discovery that the customs duty of that port were so severe that they could not afford to bring ashore their considerable cargo and so much of it was dumped into the sea. They promptly left for Bethany where they saw the first steamboat in their experience and ventured upon it to Albany, from whence they journeyed by two boats for 325 miles to Buffalo, with the intention of pushing overland or by lake boat to Ohio.

At Buffalo they chanced to put up at a tavern kept by a man named Miller. This man had a number of relatives who had been harshly ejected from their former homes in the United States because of their loyalist sentiments at the time of the American Revolution. These people had relocated along the Canadian side of the Niagara River near Fort Erie. Some of his relatives had recently penetrated to the Talbot Settlement and sent back news of its development. Miller argued with the travellers from Devon "Why not go into Canada and stay under the British flag?" In the end Miller's advice prevailed and he engaged the lake schooner "Niagara" under Captain Scott to take the party along Lake Erie to Port Stanley.

Arriving at this port they were dismayed to discover only a warehouse kept by a Mrs. Whitcombe. They were angry with Miller who had got them into this, but the terms of their contract with Captain Scott compelled a landing.

The next day Gilbert and Westlake, with great hardihood, set out to follow blazed trails to Port Talbot to interview old Colonel Talbot about land on which to locate. From Colonel Talbot on Sept. 23, 1831, Gilbert purchased three hundred acres of virgin land at 12 shillings and 6 pence per acre, £187-10 in all, which was less than one third of his capital. The locations of his lots were: Lots 12 and 13 south, and Lot 12, first range north on the Edgeware Road, (a mere trail indicated by blazes.) Westlake made a similar purchase. The exact location of each were privately determined between Gilbert and Westlake who flipped a coin to decide by chance whether each would have corner lots or one of them would have the corners. Gilbert won two throws out of three and won the corner lots, Westlake taking the next two east.

At Port Stanley, Penhale and Andrews parted company with these two. Penhale opened a blacksmith shop, but later he too bought land on the Edgeware Road. Andrews, who was a well-educated man and a Baptist preacher, found employment as a teacher in the first grammar school in St. Thomas.

The Gilbert and Westlake families made their way to St. Thomas by wagon, through almost unbroken forest, a journey of great hardship with their inexperience. The women were left for two weeks in St. Thomas, while the men pushed on to their allotments and set up rough log huts for their temporary accomodation. The back-breaking labours of clearing the land might have been discouraging but for the evidence of the success of earlier settlers along the Talbot Road. By winter they had four acres into wheat or ready for potatoes and they could turn their attention to long-range planning for permanent homes. To Gilbert it seemed a tragedy to witness the common

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practice of other settlers in burning magnificent oak, walnut, maple, ash and hickory just to get it out of the way for cultivation. He talked constantly to his eldest son, aged eleven, of how this timber could be conserved to recreate "Rhude" in Yarmouth.

The next year they built a more comfortable house, and in 1835 he bought Lot 13, north range, from the Canada Land Co. through Colonel Burwell for £62-10.

The four families began to write to their former friends in Devon, giving glowing descriptions of the country. A few immigrants from Devonshire had located in the Talbot Settlement, but as an outcome of the successful adventures of this particular party settled together on the Edgeware Road, there followed over the next ten years (1832-1842) a migration from the town of Holdsworthy such that almost every family name prominent in the ancient Holdsworthy records began to appear in Yarmouth. The transfer of so many of their neighbours must have been gratifying to the Edgeware "colony".

### THE SCOTCH SETTLERS AT KILMARTIN

The pioneer settlers of the Kilmartin district of North Yarmouth were principally composed of emigrants from the western part of the Scottish Highlands and were mostly Presbyterian. The majority of them were poor, many of them having scarcely enough means to pay their passage out from the old land. A journey such as this required from eight to twelve weeks to accomplish, and many hardships to endure, before their arrival at Port Stanley. Usually the first matter to be attended to was to visit Colonel Talbot at Port Talbot to arrange for a grant of land.

Up until the year 1830 the whole of that part of the township north of the Talbot Road was an almost unbroken wilderness. Richard Gilbert's and Simon Westlake's clearings were the first undertaken.

In the month of October 1831, a ship load of Scottish emigrants landed at Port Stanley, among them being James Campbell with his wife, six sons and three daughters, who came from the parish of Kilmartin, in Argyleshire, Scotland, and located a section on the 12th concession, taking possession in the following spring. Every succeeding year brought new arrivals, principally from the same parish, until in a comparatively few years the whole of the northern portion of the township was occupied by this hardy race of people.

There were Fergusons, McIntyres, Campbells, McKellars, Blacks, Smiths, Taylors, McColls, McBaynes, McBanes, Thompsons, Dewars, McGregors, Sinclairs, Leitches, McLays, Nobles, Pattersons, Gillies, and others whose children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren continued to occupy a considerable part of this section until the present time.

These people were men and women of firm faith and indomitable courage. They grappled with every privation and hardship incident to pioneer life to hew out a home for themselves and their children. They were a people devout and sincere and soon a church was built in the midst of their settlement. In the conscientious discharge of what they recognized as their sacred duty to God, according to the opportunity they had, they have bequeathed to their descendants a rich heritage of precept and example.

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A story is told concerning Richard Gilbert's family and a family of Highland Scotch named McIntyre. The McIntyres in search of land, wandered along the trail which was the Edgeware Road and came to the Gilbert home. Mr. Gilbert, still having his cash reserves in his home in the form of gold coins, was a bit suspicious and frightened of these men dressed in their Highland costume and speaking the Gaelic language. Fortunately one could speak a few words of English and they were able to make their needs known. They were given food and shelter in a sheep pen filled with pea straw for the night. Resuming their search for land the four brothers were successful in obtaining four 100 acre lots on the 10th concession.

Then four McGregor brothers took the next four lots, and it can be readily understood that this concession between the Catfish Creek and Kettle Creek came to be called "the Glen". Today Donald McGregor is the only descendant living here. The first brick house built in the district was built across the road on the farm now occupied by Keith Davis. The builder was Duncan McGregor who learned his trade in Glasgow.

Except for a period of unrest in 1837-1839 Yarmouth enjoyed a time of unusual tranquility. By 1840 there were 23,000 acres under cultivation, many established orchards and ten sawmills and five grist mills. The ten saw mills inspired Richard Gilbert to conserve the magnificent timber of his estate, which had been breaking his heart to burn, and he shrewdly set aside the best stands to preserve as woodlots against the building of a new "Rhude" in Yarmouth. He started a family habit which endured for three generations of selecting the finest logs for home seasoning.

His first good house, built apparently before 1840, was to be succeeded by two others. This first permanent house was a massive building of heavy hand-hewn oak beams, half of which was later moved to another location and exists today as the renovated residence of Lot 13, Edgeware Road south. Two subsequent constructions, one of frame and the second of brick which followed, were eventually incorporated into the handsome brick house which was the final realization of the ambitions of the family to recreate their Devon home in Ontario. But when "Rhude of Devon" was eventually imitated in 1872, it turned out to be twins, two houses on opposite corner lots.

#### THE TWIN HOUSES ON THE EDGEWARE ROAD

The two houses were built not by old Richard, but by two of his sons, Matthew and William, who had been four and ten years of age in the year of migration. William had now married Elizabeth Tansley, (who had made her advent into the world in 1826 on an emigrant ship while it was docking in New York harbour.) Their children, John and Elizabeth, later Mrs. James Westlake, were husky teen-agers in the year the twin houses were built and old enough to take an interest in many of the details of the operations.

Matthew (on Lot 12 south,) and William on Lot 13, north, engaged a contractor named Auckland and developed a certain rivalry in the realization of Richard's dream. While the houses were almost alike, William's came out two feet larger in each dimension. Matthew, however, pre-empted the name "Rhude" and William's place was nameless until the family of his son John, who eventually inherited the property, gave it the name of "Gilbert Hall."