

## **Gilbert Jamieson: the first in the family to immigrate to the United States**

*By RICIGS member Betty S. Hagberg*

Gilbert was born April 8, 1805 in High Drummore, Scotland, the seventh and youngest child of Alexander Jamieson and Agnes McCracken. Because there was only so much land available, it was common for the younger sons of Scottish farmers to be given a sum of money to buy their first stock and sent off to England to seek their fortune as a tea dealer or draper. Scotch Drapers, as they were known, were “packmen” who traveled through the countryside selling cloth and embroidered linens. They often sold them on credit to regular customers and then collected installment payments on a weekly basis. Tea was also sold by itinerant packmen. Eventually a successful Scotch Draper or Tea Dealer would open a shop in the English City where he was based.

We assume Gilbert took this path and we next find him on August 6, 1830, where at the age of 25, he married Jane Smith in Manchester, England. They settled in the small village of Stoney Middleton, where Jane’s family lived. Gilbert set up shop as a draper and tea dealer in Stoney Middleton and nearby Heathersage. They had five children, William (1831), Margret (1833), Janet (1835 who lived to be around 6 years old), Agnes (1837 who died in 1838), and Alexander (1839).

In 1842, Gilbert, Jane and their three surviving children sailed from Liverpool, England for the United States aboard the ship Swanton. The family arrived in New York on August 9, 1842, where Gilbert, according to family legend, met an American real estate dealer who held considerable land in western Illinois. The Jamieson’s had brought with them a large and expensive set of English china which they eventually traded for 80 acres of land south of Moline, Illinois. The family set sail down the Atlantic coast to New Orleans and up the Mississippi river to their newly acquired land.

The legend of Gilbert acquiring his land while in New York is contradicted by the land records that show him acquiring the West half of the NE Quarter of Section 12, Township 17 North Range 1 West of the 4th Prime Meridian, containing 80 acres from C.S. Franklin on October 7, 1844. Gilbert built a one room log cabin, and developed a farm from the raw land. Gilbert described the new land and the difficulties in establishing a farm in an 1846 letter:

..... the first plowing or breaking up has to be done with five or six yoke of oxen for which we pay two dollars per acre as scarcely one farmer in twenty break their own, but generally have it done by people who keep teams and plows on purpose for such work, - then there is fencing which is also considerable of a job, all with oak timber rails which we have to cut down, then cut off in ten feet lengths and split up with iron wedges into rails about 3 or 4 inches thick, .....prairie land, without timber beautiful, rich, and level as a bowling green and grows a kind of strong coarse grass so tall and rank that in July and Augt. you could not see a man on horse-back at a distance of 30 or 40 yards, such is the rich productiveness of the soil, these strong grass roots there-fore makes it very tough and hard to break, but after the first year or so, it becomes quite mellow and as easy to cultivate as a flower bed.

Another child, John Smith Jamieson was born in 1844. He died 5 days before his 12th birthday.

In 1850, Gilbert owned his original 80 acres of land, and the Agricultural Census shows a value of \$500 for the 30 acres of improved and 50 acres of unimproved land. He owned \$100 in farm machinery and \$200 in livestock including, 1 horse, 3 milk cows, 4 working oxen, 14 'other cattle', and 36 swine. He had produced during the year, 200 bushels of wheat and 100 bushels of Indian corn. He acquired an additional 40 acres of adjoining land in 1854.

Various members of the family traveled from the U.S. to England and back several times over the years. Gilbert's son William returned to England in 1854 and married Ann Cocker in 1855 in Stoney Middleton. After their marriage, they returned to live south of Moline. Gilbert, Jane and their son Alexander, then 20 years old, returned to England in 1859. Gilbert and Jane lived in Stoney Middleton, where Gilbert was variously described as a retired farmer and gentleman, and Alexander studied Medicine at the University of Edinburgh, Scotland.

In September of 1867, Gilbert's son William Jamieson arranged for the purchase from George Stephens, a brick house known as the Pickett property located on the south-west corner of Salter (19th Street) and Henry (5th Avenue) Moline, as a residence for his parents who were returning from England where they had spent the last 8 years. When Alexander and his family arrived in 1868 they lived at this address for a little over a year with Jane and Gilbert. In September 1869, Gilbert and Jane returned again to England, this time for about a year, and the house was rented and eventually sold to Charles R. Ainsworth.

When Gilbert and Jane returned to Moline in October of 1870, they lived at Park (7th Avenue) NW Corner Edwards (22nd Street). Gilbert died at 69 years of age at this residence on April 14, 1874. The funeral was held at the Methodist Episcopal Church with burial at Universal Cemetery, Portersville (Bowlesburg Cemetery, Silvis). After Gilbert's death, his wife Jane stayed at their home in Moline along with her grandson E.G. (Ted) Jamieson while he attended Washington School. By 1880 Jane was living alone in a house on the Jamieson farm.

In December of 1889 Jane traveled to Rossville, Kansas to live with or visit her daughter-in-law Ann Cocker Jamieson and her family. She died there March 4, 1890, shortly before her 85th birthday. Her body was returned to Moline for burial with her husband Gilbert.