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Local woman proves descent from Loyalists



More than 100 years ago, loyal British subjects were forced to pack up their belongings and leave homes and friends behind as they fled the United States.

With the signing of the Declaration of Independence, these loyal subjects of the British crown were considered to be traitors to the American movement for independence and many were forced to flee their country or face punishment.

The people who fled were proud of their British heritage and so too are their descendants today. Norwich resident Irene Strachan shares that pride and is one of those who has attained the distinguished honor of being accepted as a member of the United Empire Loyalists Association of Canada.

Membership in this prestigious organization entitles Mrs. Strachan, the former Irene Gilbert, to use the letters U.E. after her name. Membership in the association is granted only to applicants who can provide

proof of lineal descent from the ancestor from whom eligibility is claimed, said Mrs. Strachan.

The Loyalist ancestor from which descent is claimed must have shown military or other service of loyalty to the British cause during the American Revolutionary War.

Mrs. Strachan traces her Loyalist lineage to Josiah Gilbert, a corporal in the King's American Regiment. After the signing of the declaration of American independence in 1776, he came under the penalties of the acts of the Legislature of New Jersey and in 1783 a body of troops came to his house in search of him.

He barely had time to get on his horse to escape, pursued to the Alleghany River which he swam across. Though wounded, he managed to escape and make his way to New Brunswick where, as a Loyalist, he received a grant of land.

He remained in New Brunswick until 1799 when he

came to Long Point in Norfolk County. There he married Sarah Backhouse (Backus) of Port Rowan.

In 1808 they moved to South Norwich, settling in the Springford area where he made his first clearing in the settlement. He paid \$1.25 an acre for the land and brought with him the first horse in the township.

The Gilberts had nine children. Salina (later Mahony) was just six weeks old when they made the move to Norwich. She lived to be nearly 104 years old. Her sister Sarah, born in 1809, was the first white child born in the township.

Their first son, Peter, born in 1803, married Hannah Collard. They had five children, one of whom, David Hugh (1837-1914) married Hannah McEwan. They had seven children including Arthur Edward (1873-1964) who married Katie Corbitt.

Arthur and Katie Gilbert had four children, now all retired school teachers.

Distinguished achievement

After much long, hard work, Irene Strachan of Norwich has received her membership in the United Empire Loyalist Association of Canada, having proved her descent from Loyalist Josiah Gilbert. Membership in the association allows her to use the initials U.E. after her name.



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School bus days over

The good old school days will soon come to an end for Hilton Hilliker of Norwich. After 26 years of driving school buses in Oxford County he is retiring as of the end of August. The students at North Norwich Public School in Burgessville presented Mr. Hilliker with a token of their appreciation last Wednesday. Above making the presentation of two lawnchairs for the students is Principal Brian Rice (right). Mr. Hilliker was also the maintenance man for the buses kept in Burgessville as well as a driver. Between 1954 and 1961 he owned and operated his own buses. When the new school was built he went to work for the North Norwich School Board and then the Oxford County board following amalgamation. (Photo by Howard McCombs).

