

## **Elmhurst – The Yeomans Farm**

By Emily Tuttle Huntley

An old deed shows that Elijob Kent purchased the land from the Duke of Cumbert the 14<sup>th</sup> of September 1818. This lot contained 83 acres and was bounded by other lots conveyed to Elijob Kent March 5, 1810.

This 83 acres was purchased from Elijob Kent in the first of the year of 1837 by Gilbert Yeomans. Mr. Yeomans was preceeded to Walworth by two sons and a daughter. After purchasing this farm, he removed here from Greene County, owing to the blindness of his wife. In the year 1846 his son Eliab Yeomans with his family came to reside with them. More land was bought from the Kent tract just north of the town line between Walworth and Macedon and which land to the amount of 174 and 44/100 acres had been conveyed to one John Wilson for the sum of \$7,439 by Elijob Kent, which made the farm 257 acres.

Mrs. Gilbert Yeomans died in 1848 and Mr. Gilbert Yeomans in 1849 and at their death Eliab continued to own and live on the farm.

Eliab was a progressive man and besides enlarging the farm he developed it to a remarkable extent for those days. He put in the first tile drain system known in these parts. He invented and had made the first hay rake - considered a great improvement. One would laugh today at following on foot and tipping it up to dump the hay.

His brother Theron (also known as T. G.) Yeomans owned a nursery and much of his fine nursery stock was utilized by Eliab on his farm. Hedges were set and yearly trimmed to new beauty. Large orchards - 20 acres of apples in one lot, 10 in another – and chestnut trees were set out. Also all kinds of fruit trees.

Much of the beauty of the town can be traced to the interest of the Yeomans family in trees and to the fine stock they kept. Many trees were generously given to encourage planting. This home yard was filled with beautiful shrubs and trees of many varieties that were later removed for the purpose of grading the lawn. I well remember the regret with which some were taken out by my father, Albert Yeomans, who succeeded his father Eliab.

To mention the trees again: just south of the house along the road on the west side were lined up a long row of horse chestnut trees. On the west side of the road was a long row of mountain ash; otherwise the road was lined with maples.

In the lot south of the house was the family burial plot until after the death of Eliab Yeomans, when all were removed to the Palmyra Cemetery.

Eliab Yeomans with his brother Theron were also the first to have made glass fruit jars or cans. Previous to this earthen jars had been used. The cans were far from being the handy cans we use today and were too small in the neck. They were sealed with corks covered with rosin and it was no pleasure to do it, but the idea had been born that fruit could be canned in glass and the glass wouldn't break. It was hard to convince people of this at first.

The house has contained for over 75 years a furnace. The first, which burned wood, people came from long distances to see. It also had one of the first coal furnaces. It also contained the first sliding double doors which ran on a track and were the only ones in use in this part of the county at that time.

Eliab Yeomans assisted materially in the building of Walworth Academy in 1842. Fond of horses, he bred and raised some very fine Hambletonians. One beautiful team was struck by lightning. He kept a very fine riding horse which he rode as Marshall on general training days.

Help for the farm was obtained by going to New York to the Immigration Department. On one of his trips to New York he brought back the first meodian in town. This was loaded and carried to church on Sunday for a series of years.

At his death in 1873 the farm was divided up amongst his heirs and his son Albert took the homestead and the original 83 acres. The farm then so much smaller was as rapidly as possible turned into a fruit farm and so continued through Albert's life time.

Albert Yeomans was an expert horticulturist and was a charter member of the New York State Horticultural Society. He was one of the first to set out sour cherry trees. During his life he was Sheriff of Wayne County and a member of the New York State Assembly. He was one of three men who promoted and organized the Wayne County Fire Relief Association, a charter member of the Grange, and active in its organization.

During his ownership of the farm a tenant house was built. A big barn was built in 1876 and the main house was remodeled to the extent of a front porch and raising the roof to two full stories and attic and bathroom installed. The downstairs rooms are unaltered with the old ivory woodwork and wood panels of birdseye maple under the windows.

At the death of Albert Yeomans the farm was taken over by his grandson, C. M. Huntley, who is the present owner. He is the son of Albert E. and Edith Yeomans Huntley, who are living on another part of the Eliab Yeomans acreage.

The old orchards have disappeared and, with the agricultural depression, the air of prosperity is gone, but still the home and acres have a hold on the hearts of all who have lived there.

Additional info added by Emily Tuttle Huntley:

Clifford Mason and Emily Tuttle Huntley moved to Elmhurst in April 1920.

In 1920 a tornado struck and destroyed the cherry orchard south of the house and many other fruit trees on the farm. As Clifford liked dairy farming, he turned the place into a dairy farm. He and their two sons, Stuart Tuttle and Clifford Donald, worked the place until Stuart was called in the Service. Then Clifford and Donald continued until Clifford had a stroke and had to give up farming. Don continued with help until he became Superintendent of the Water Department at Walworth. Then Gordon Bush has worked it on shares every since.

*Editor's Notes:*

- 1) *This information is the property of the Walworth Historical Society.*
- 2) *It was written prior to her death in 1992 at age 98.*
- 3) *Emily has been described as one of the best teachers in Walworth. She taught at the West Walworth Road School on Route 31F, west of Macedon Center, and was the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade teacher at Walworth Elementary for many years.*