

Omund Gilbertson

From interview by Hannah Lende

Omund Gilbertson was born August 22, 1857 at Valdres, Norway. May 14, 1880 with his sister and her husband, and John Bakka, he left Norway on the Cunard line. They landed in Cassia, Iowa, June 5. Here Mr. Gilbertson stayed for about five months doing different types of farm work.

In the fall of 1880 he went to Mitchell Co., Iowa where he hired out to farmers. In the spring of 1880 Gilbert Auren and he left for Goose river, Dakota territory to look for land. They found some land to their liking and started walking to Fargo to get right to file on this land. On their way they met Ole Halverson who advised them not to file on land in that country until they had been near the Sheyenne river. They took his advice and started for the Sheyenne river. It was a hot day and no water around. After fourteen miles of walking, they came to Omund Opheim's place and stayed over night in his loghouse.

The next day the two men started out in search for land. A short time later they came to a tent where Ole Halverson, his brother, Sever, and Pete Nelson were just going to have dinner. The two men were invited to have cooked mush with them. After dinner a short time later, Gilbert Auren and a man by the name of Thor Hagen squatted on section 13, township 145, range 58. The land wasn't surveyed at this time. A person had to be on the land for five years before it could be proved up and Mr. Gilbertson wasn't in favor of being tied up for that length of time just then. He helped the men build their claim shanty and

went back to Goose river and stayed during harvest and threshing. He then hired out to Torgreme Fitcher for \$20 a month to walk behind a plow. He worked there one month and was raised \$2 to stay another month.

The same fall he worked for Levite Gopperud for \$1 a day, sawing big trees and cutting them to a thickness of seven inches. This was to be a barn.

In the fall of 1881 Mr. Gilbertson went to Wisconsin to work in the woods. In March, 1882 he went back to Dakota. The winter of 1881 and 1882 was an open winter.

Mr. Gilbertson built his log house this summer of 1882 on section 10, township 145, range 58.

Mr. Gilbertson worked for R. C. Cooper during harvest in 1883 for \$2 a day. For four days the hired men threshed on one straw pile. Al Shue was the boss. One day the men didn't have much to do and Mr. Gilbertson and Gilbert Auren were told to clean up around another straw pile and burn it. The two men worked continually and faithfully, but soon Al Shue came and said they were going too slow. He set a fire to the straw before the men had finished. The whole straw pile burned up.

After harvest Mr. Gilbertson went back and completed his log house. In the winter of 1883 Ole Skrien and Mr. Gilbertson went on skis to Portland to look for someone who had oxen to sell. They stayed over night with a man by the name of Ole Gavaney. Here Mr. Gilbertson parted with Ole Skrien and went alone to Mayville. Six miles north of Mayville he came to Gilbert Moen's place just before a snowstorm came up. He waited at Moen's three days before the storm abated. He was informed that Ole Kittleson, northwest of Portland on the north side of the Goose

river, had some oxen he wanted to sell. He got to Kittleson's just in time, before another snowstorm came up. Paul Boe, who now lives at Hatton, N. Dak. had raised the oxen. Mr. Gilbertson paid \$150 for two oxen. Mr. Kittleson was to keep the oxen until spring.

In the spring of 1883 Arne Thompson, a neighbor and Mr. Gilbertson went on skis to get the oxen. Gilbertson then bought an old wagon from Iver Thompson and went to Mayville to purchase his first machinery, a breaking plow and a smoothing harrow. They started for home on a nice clear morning. Very soon it clouded up and started to rain. It rained all day. The creeks were getting full and running over. With difficulty they crossed the creek with the oxen. When they got as far as the present Finley, it commenced getting dark. They took the wrong road and went too far north. Gilbertson walked around and tried to find a claim shanty, while Arne Thompson stayed with the oxen. Mr. Gilbertson found the shanty and they went there to spend the night. They were entirely wet. There was a stove in the shanty and Mr. Gilbertson had just half of a match. They managed to make fire, using hay and brush which was outside. There was an oven on this stove and Mr. Thompson wanted to dry his new shoes. He put them in the oven and left them there too long. When he took them out they were too small for him. He had to split them all over to get them on.

In the morning the two men started south and came to Omund Opheim's place in time for dinner. Again they resumed their journey and came south of old Mardell where the creek was so high it was very difficult to cross. After a wet and tiresome journey, they arrived home with the oxen.

Mr. Gilbertson went to Cooperstown the next day for provisions and crossed the river in a little wagon box. Close to Cooperstown there was water on the land as far as he could see north and south. Mr. Gilbertson also got some provisions for his neighbors. On his way home he carried over one hundred pounds of groceries. Mr. Cooper had plowed all around and Mr. Gilbertson walked for miles in a plowed field. When he came to Jack Brown's place in Washburn township, the creek was so high and there was such a swift stream, they hardly dared cross. When he came to the Sheyenne river, Arne Lukkeson, who now lives in Devils Lake, N. Da. took him across the river in the same wagon box.

Mr. Gilbertson kept on batching and breaking up land. He put in nine acres in 1883 and got about one hundred thirty bushels out of it.

In the fall of 1883 there was to be a dance in Mr. Gilbertson's log house, with Jacob Olson, from Broadview township as fiddler. Henry Gullickson, a neighbor had a team of horses and a "democrat" wagon. He and Mr. Gilbertson were to go and find some women to attend the dance as there weren't enough women around at that time. They went as far north as "horse hill", Romness township before they found any. They gathered seven girls from around there. There were quite a number of boys up there also who wanted to go along. There wasn't room for them in that small wagon. The boys then became peeved and wanted to get up a dance around their territory, and urged the girls not to go. Finally, the two men had to go home ten miles without a single girl.

In 1884 and 1885 the crops were quite fair. In 1884 Mr. Gilbertson's crop yielded twenty-nine bushels to the acre.

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In 1885 the price of wheat was only thirty-eight cents a bushel.

April 1887 Mr. Gilbertson was married to Mary Hagen in his log house, by Reverend Quamme. Four children were born to this marriage. In October, 1899 Mrs. Gilbertson died.

Mr. Gilbertson stayed on section 10 until 1903, when he put up buildings on section 3, Sverdrup township where he moved and has lived ever since.