

NORTH AVON

GILBERT'S MILL BUILT BY
THOMAS HANNA 1808, REBUILT 1826,
SOLD TO C S GILBERT 1855
CONVERTED TO A DWELLING 1954.
ALSO A SCHOOL, BLACKSMITH
STORE AND DISTILLERY.

TOWN OF AVON
HISTORIAN 2012

Dedication of the North Avon Historical Marker
October 2013

Special thanks to Ishmael Olivaries and Scott Storke of the Mill and Thomas Crye and
Crew of the Avon Highway Department

Welcome: David LeFeber, Supervisor, Town of Avon

Introductions: Maureen Kingston, Historian, Town of Avon

North Avon

North Avon is that area generally in the former school districts Numbers 8 and 9. District 8 schoolhouse was located on the northwest corner of North Avon and Oak Opening Roads, often referred to as “the Bigelow District” and was shared with students from Avon and Rush. The original District 9 school was built about 1812 and was located near the corner of North Avon Road and Route 15. The “new” school was constructed about 1860 on the north side of North Avon Road at Jenks Road. That building is now a residence.

The community stretches from Monroe County south to Dutch Hollow and East Avon and from the Lima Town line west to Route 15 and beyond. Good soil for raising crops combined with available water power prompted Thomas Hanna to construct a grist mill along Hannah [sic] aka Rock Bottom Creek. The first mill was a log building, replaced with a frame structure by a miller named MacGregor. The present mill was built on the site when the second mill was taken down in 1826.

Early assessment rolls for the Town of Avon for 1817 list Thomas Hannah [sic] as having a house and barn and 200 acres of land. Alexander MacGregor owned 12 acres of land.

For 1818, Thomas Hanna had a house, barn and 130 acres.

In 1819, he owned only 80 acres of land, but had a grist mill, the real estate being valued at \$2,380. The indication here is that the mill was successful, obviously filling a need for flour production and that the miller operated a modern facility appropriate for the time.

In 1855 Charles S. Gilbert purchased the property. He was born at Mutford Hall, Suffolk, England and came to America at age twenty in 1837. After landing in New York City, he came by way of the Hudson River and Erie Canal to Rochester, famously known then as the “Flour City”. Charles Gilbert had apprenticed in England at age fourteen to learn the milling trade. Here he worked in Pittsford and Penfield and proved himself to be an expert miller. He married Mary Clark in 1839 and she too had been born in Suffolk, England. Two of their six children, Arthur and Alfred, worked in the mill from their childhood, became familiar with all aspects of the milling business and succeeded their father in ownership of the North Avon property. The Gilbert Brothers continued their father’s improvement of the mechanics of the mill, maintained the integrity of the product and built on his reputation as a fine businessman. Charles had constructed a house near the mill for his family, planted trees and generally helped to encourage community growth around its center industry.

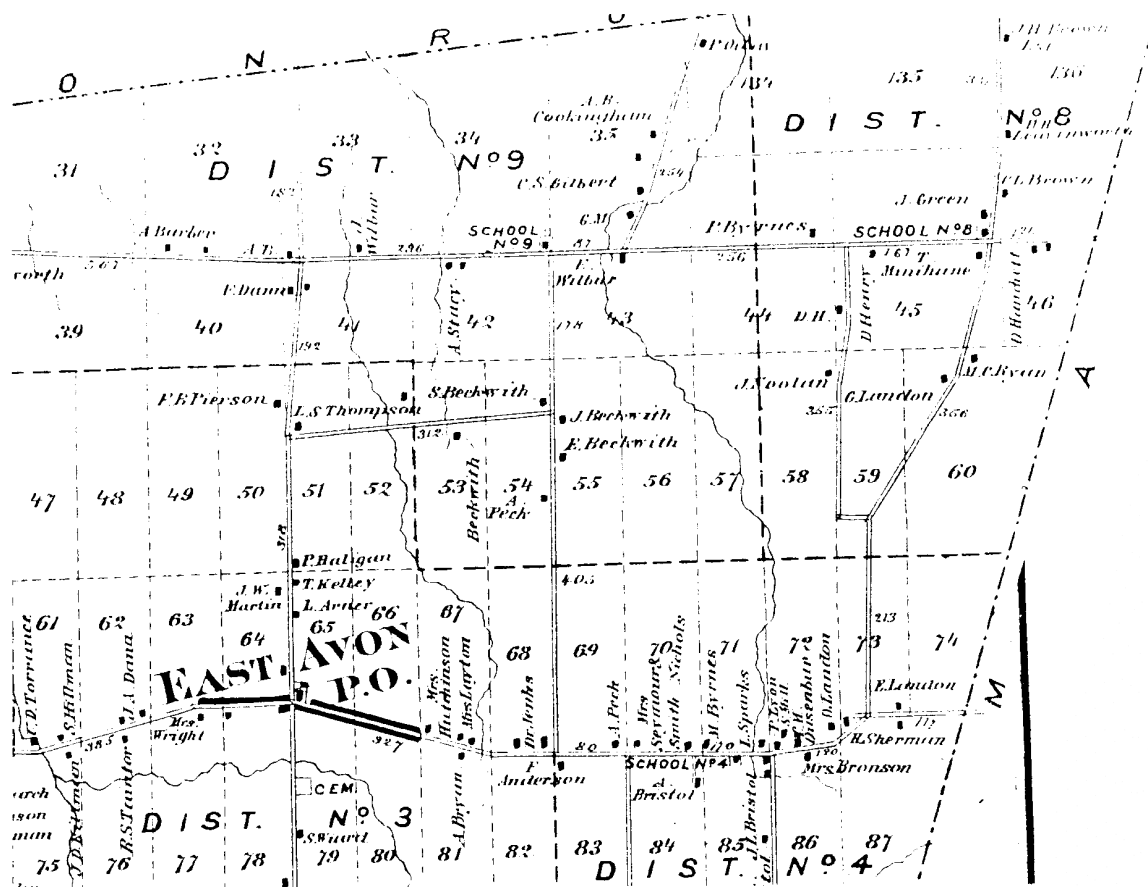
All settlements provide various services to those who live there. In addition to the schools, there was a store in the house next door, a blacksmith shop between the mill and the creek, a distillery a bit farther north, a watering trough for customers and passers-by near the Cookingham Farm, a Baptist meeting place in the Bigelow District near the North Avon/Oak Opening intersection and a cemetery on the east side of Gilbert Mill Road, across from the mill. East Avon Presbyterian Church and a later East Avon Baptist Church also provided nearby services.

In 1954, the mill passed from the Gilbert Family to Mr. Kenneth Gernold, an interior designer who saw potential in the old building and offered a new use for it, assuring its preservation. With great attention to detail and deep appreciation for the fittings of the mill itself, the new owner developed three apartments and his decorating shop. Mr. Gernold passed away January 15, 2007, after having lived here for 55 years. Presently, the treasured property is owned by Ismael Olivares.

Some family names taken from early maps of the area include Barber, Beckwith, Brown, Cookingham, Crouse, Dann, Donnelly, Fishell, Fredericks, Gilbert, Hanna, Hovey, Landon, Martin, Mulligan, Murphy, Noolan, Pierson, Shellman, Steffens, Thomson, Wilbur, among others.

In modern times, the North Avon community still retains a sense of place and pride. The mill remains as the centerpiece of the area, among the still-rich farm land, established farms and the new houses of those who have more recently “settled” here.

We thank those of our past and we celebrate those of our present in recognizing North Avon as a very special part of our town.



Map from the *Atlas of Livingston County, New York*, 1872.

Sources

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