

## Joseph and Barbara (Fox) Gilman: Pioneers of Taylor County, Wisconsin

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**“Sell out and come to  
Taylor County; buy a  
farm and grow rich.”**

*Source: Local Taylor  
County Publication, 1878*

Joseph Gilman, christened Joseph Anglemene, was born in Plattsburgh, New York on August 13, 1853. His parents were Thomas Gilman and Mathilda Gratton, French Canadians who had moved with their families from villages near Montréal to upper New York state a few years earlier. Thomas and Mathilda married in Plattsburgh and began their family there; they eventually had thirteen children. Joseph spent his childhood in New York, along the shores of Lake Champlain. He also spent time in Canada. His parents moved back and forth between the

two countries; two of his younger brothers were born in Canada. In 1870, Joseph moved with his grandfather, parents and nine siblings to Chilton in Calumet County, Wisconsin. This was a farming community, located a few miles northeast of Fond du Lac, between Lake Winnebago and Lake Michigan. Joseph is listed on the 1870

census for the town, along with the rest of his family in the household of his grandfather, Andrew Gratton. He was seventeen at the time.

Joseph first came to Taylor County in 1875 as a young man of twenty-two. The publication, *100 Year Anniversary 1874-1974: Stetsonville, Little Black, Deer Creek*, provides details on the establishment of Stetsonville. It notes that French Canadians were among the first to settle here. They were pioneers who had originally moved from the East Coast to work on the farms or in the lumber mills of Fond du Lac. These newcomers to Wisconsin soon discovered that work was plentiful, but money was not. At about that time, the Homestead Act was passed to encourage settlement of virgin territory. Under the Act, settlers could receive 80 acres, or 160 acres if one was a Civil War veteran. In June of 1874, a group of French Canadians from Fond du Lac, under the leadership of Peter Liberty, headed north to take advantage of the provisions of the Homestead Act. These men

wanted to build homes and establish families on land of their own. Joseph was among them or came



*Tintype of Barbara Fox as a young woman  
c 1875*

shortly thereafter.

After a few years on his own in Stetsonville, Joseph returned to Fond du Lac to marry Miss Barbara Ann Fox. Barbara was born on April 3, 1857 at Mt. Calvary, Wisconsin. She was the daughter of Nicholas (Fox) Fuchs and Barbara (Miller) Mehler. Her parents had emigrated from Germany, but met and married in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Joseph and Barbara's wedding took place on January 20, 1880 at St. Louis' Catholic Church in Fond du Lac. After the marriage, Joseph brought his new bride to Taylor County. There, they established their home and raised their family. The Gilmans first settled on a farm four miles west of Stetsonville. In September of 1888, they moved to a farm at the southeast corner of Medford. From 1902 on, Joseph and Barbara lived in a home on Third Street, across from the courthouse in Medford. Lumbering was a major industry in this heavily wooded area of Wisconsin. For many years, Joseph worked as a millwright. Joseph and Barbara are listed in the U.S. Census Records for Taylor County in 1880, 1900, 1910, 1920, and 1930. They are also found in the Wisconsin State Census Records of 1885 and 1895. Joseph is listed simply as laborer on a couple of the census records. He worked hard to maintain a home and provide for his children.

Marietta, their first child, was born in Stetsonville on November 23, 1880. Five other children followed: Martha Elizabeth (January 6, 1883), Thomas Arthur (August 11, 1887), Joseph Edward (July 8, 1890), Albert James (February 27, 1892) and Durana Matilda (May 2, 1896). Joseph lived just twenty-four hours. When they grew up, Martha, Thomas



*The Joseph Gilman Family c 1900 - Standing (L to R): Marietta, Albert, Tom, and Martha; Seated: Joseph and Barbara with Durana standing between her parents*



and Albert moved west and settled in Beach, North Dakota. Only the oldest and the youngest, Marietta and Durana, remained in Wisconsin to raise their families. At the time of their Golden Wedding Anniversary on January 22, 1930, Joseph and Barbara had thirty-one grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. Joseph died at his home in Medford on October 25, 1930. Barbara died in Marshfield, Wisconsin on June 18, 1932. She had been ill since November of the previous year, when she went to live with her daughter Durana (Mrs. Wayne Shookman) in Junction City, Wisconsin.



*Medford, WI 1910*

### **Taylor County in the Early Years**

Taylor County was established in 1875, the same year that Joseph Gilman arrived, and was carved out of portions of Chippewa, Lincoln, Clark and Marathon Counties. Medford was established as the County Seat. This was at the same time that the Wisconsin Central Railroad had expanded to northern Wisconsin, opening up new territory for homesteading. Hopeful settlers traveled by train to Colby, which was as far as the trains could take them. From Colby they walked to Stetsonville, along freshly-laid track over which trains had not begun to operate. Joseph liked to tell stories about the early days of the railroad, when people “carried lanterns by night and tin pans by day to keep the wolves from attacking them on their travels through the woods” (Gilmans’ Golden Wedding Anniversary newspaper article, Joseph Gilman’s obituary, and “100 Year Anniversary”).

There is the story passed down in the family that the town of Gilman, Wisconsin (located a few miles to the west of Medford) was named after Joseph Gilman. According to a letter written by grandson Richard Aschenbrener in 1982, his mother told him that Joseph worked on the railroad when the rails were first being laid in the area. The person in

charge of naming the towns asked Joseph for his last name. This was the name given to the area, before the town was actually established. This story is contradicted by the official history of the town, which states that the village of Gilman was named after Sallie Gilman. She was the wife of Delos R. Moon, President of the Northwestern Lumber Company, which was responsible for the first logging in the area.

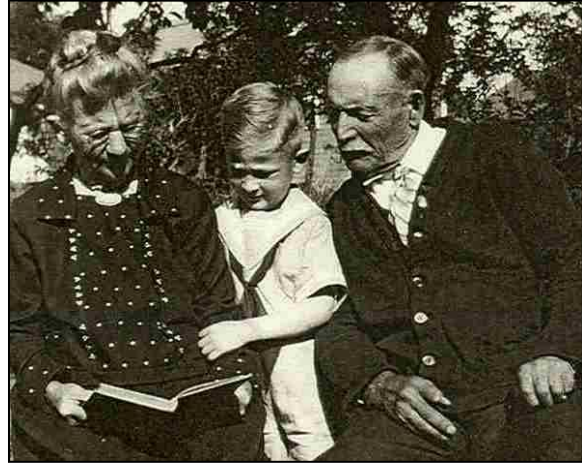
The first mention of the name of Stetsonville is in the written records of a meeting held in the community of Little Black on April 4, 1875. Stetsonville is named for Isiah S. Stetson, who built the first sawmill in the village. The French Canadians settled a few miles south of Stetsonville. Then came the Germans who settled to the east and west of town. Next came the Swiss and Norwegian immigrants. In 1878, a notice in the local Taylor County publication read, "Government land costs \$2.50 an acre, and whiskey \$2.00 a bottle, yet there are many who prefer whiskey to land" ("100 Year Anniversary").

By 1879, there were 150 logging camps on the railroad line between Stevens Point and Ashland. Nearly three thousand men were employed. At about that time, Mr. Kingsley, owner of the Stetsonville Mill, ran an ad in the newspaper: "For Sale: A Sawmill situated in Taylor County, on the line of the WCRR...capacity of mill 25,000 feet of lumber per day. Machinery first class in all its appointments. There is enough pine and hemlock tributary to this mill to last ten years. The country around is thickly settled, and the settlers are anxious to dispose of their timber. There are 160 acres of good agricultural land to be sold with the mill" ("100 Year Anniversary").

By the year 1880, there was a steady flow of immigrants to the area. People desiring to settle on the improved railroad and government land could ship their household goods via the Wisconsin Central Railroad Company for a 50% discount off normal freight rates. The railroad company also offered "exploring tickets" to individuals seeking a place to settle. If they bought land from the company, the price of the ticket was deducted from the selling price. By 1880, the company had also built side tracks to Stetsonville and Little Black. In the town, a general store and a mill store were in operation. That year, a liquor license had been granted and a hotel and saloon were going up. Sacred Heart Catholic Church was built in 1885. A Lutheran Church was built in 1889 ("100 Year Anniversary").

When the European immigrants first arrived in this area of Wisconsin, they found Chippewa Indian camps in the region, but by 1890 the camps of indigenous peoples had become scarce. Other comments about life in Stetsonville at the end of the nineteenth century: "men wore whiskers and boots, chewed tobacco, spit on the sidewalk and cussed. Beer was 5 cents and the lunch was free. Laborers worked 10 hours or more a day and never went on strike. A kerosene hanging lamp and a stereoscope in the parlor were luxuries. No one was ever operated on for appendicitis. Microbes were unheard of, folks lived to a good old age, and every year walked miles to see their friends..." ("100 Year Anniversary").

Although Joseph and Barbara Gilman were both born in the United States, they were the children of immigrants. French (the language of Joseph's parents) and German (the language of Barbara's parents) were spoken in the home, in addition to English. Robert Aschenbrener, Marietta's tenth child, remembers Grandma Gilman speaking French to Grandpa Jo. In this respect, the Gilmans were no different from their neighbors. Many of the families in northern Wisconsin were recent immigrants from Northern Europe or first generation descendants. They brought their language and their culture with them. Over the years, Joseph's French-Canadian heritage and Barbara's German history, the struggles and the deeds of their forebears, were forgotten until unearthed through genealogical research.



*Barbara and Joseph Gilman with their grandson Wayne Shookman.c 1928*

A copy of Joseph's death certificate and various newspaper clippings (50<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary Celebration and obituaries) are found at the end of this article.

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Death Certificate for Joseph Gilman of Medford, Wisconsin

Department of Health—Bureau of Vital Statistics  
COPY OF DEATH RECORD

County Taylor Registered No. \_\_\_\_\_  
 Township \_\_\_\_\_  
 or \_\_\_\_\_  
 Village \_\_\_\_\_  
 or Medford (No. \_\_\_\_\_ St. \_\_\_\_\_ Ward \_\_\_\_\_)  
 City \_\_\_\_\_ (If death occurred in a hospital or institution give its NAME instead of street and number)

2 FULL NAME Joseph Gilman

(a) Residence No. \_\_\_\_\_ St. \_\_\_\_\_ Ward \_\_\_\_\_  
 (Usual place of abode)  
 Length of residence in city or town where death occurred \_\_\_\_\_ yrs. \_\_\_\_\_ mos. \_\_\_\_\_ ds. How long in U. S. if of foreign birth \_\_\_\_\_ yrs. \_\_\_\_\_ mos. \_\_\_\_\_ ds.

PERSONAL AND STATISTICAL PARTICULARS				MEDICAL CERTIFICATE OF DEATH	
3 SEX <u>male</u>	4 COLOR OR RACE <u>white</u>	5 SINGLE, MARRIED, WIDOWED OR DIVORCED (Write the Word) <u>married</u>		15 DATE OF DEATH (month, day and year) <u>Oct. 25 1930</u>	
5a If Married, Widowed or Divorced HUSBAND of (or) WIFE of <u>Barbara A. Fox</u>				17 I HEREBY CERTIFY, that I attended deceased from <u>May 2, 1930</u> , to <u>Oct. 25, 1930</u> ; that I last saw him alive on <u>Oct. 24, 1930</u> , and that death occurred on the date stated above at <u>6:32 a.m.</u>	
6 DATE OF BIRTH (month, day and year) <u>Aug. 13 1853</u>				The CAUSE OF DEATH* was as follows: <u>Acute Cardiac insufficiency</u>	
7 AGE	Years <u>77</u>	Months <u>2</u>	Days <u>12</u>	Contributory (Secondary) <u>Chronic myocarditis - Chronic interstitial nephritis - arterio sclerosis</u>	
8 OCCUPATION (a) Trade, profession or particular kind of work <u>None</u> (b) General nature of industry, business, or establishment in which employed (or employer)				(Duration) _____ yrs. _____ mos. _____ ds.	
9 BIRTHPLACE (city or town) (State or country) <u>Plattsburg, N.Y.</u>				18 WHERE WAS DISEASE CONTRACTED, IF NOT AT PLACE OF DEATH? Did an operation precede death? _____ Date of _____ Was there an autopsy? _____ What test confirmed diagnosis? <u>Clinical physical</u>	
PARENTS	10 NAME OF FATHER <u>Thomas Gilman</u>			(SIGNED) <u>A. E. Myster</u> M. D. 192 _____ (Address) <u>Medford, Wis.</u>	
	11 BIRTHPLACE OF FATHER (city or town) (State or country) <u>Canada</u>			* State the disease causing death, or in deaths from violent causes state (1) means and nature of injury; and (2) whether accidental, suicidal, or homicidal. (See reverse side for additional space.)	
	12 MAIDEN NAME OF MOTHER <u>Matilda Kratoch</u>			19 PLACE OF BURIAL, CREMATION OR REMOVAL <u>Medford, Wis.</u> DATE OF BURIAL <u>10/27 1930</u>	
	13 BIRTHPLACE OF MOTHER (city or town) (State or country) <u>Canada</u>			20 UNDERTAKER <u>J. C. Hartwig</u> ADDRESS <u>Medford, Wis.</u>	
14 Informant <u>Mrs. W. Shoemaker</u> (Address) <u>Medford, Wis.</u>					
15 Filed <u>10/25 1930</u> <u>Cl. Blakeslee</u> Registrar					
Filed _____ 192 _____ Sub-Registrar.					

MARGIN RESERVED FOR BINDING.

Write Plainly with Unfading Ink—This is a Permanent Record

This form of certificate is to be used only by LOCAL REGISTRARS for reporting to the REGISTER OF DEEDS. Send this certificate to the REGISTER OF DEEDS when the monthly report is sent to the State Office. No Notarization is required. All original certificates must be sent to the State Office with the monthly reports.

### Newspaper clippings

The following articles are from the scrapbook of Joseph and Barbara Gilman's daughter, Marietta Estelle Gilman Aschenbrener. The names and dates of the publications are unknown. Note that the handwritten date of death on Joseph Gilman's obituary is in error. The correct date according to the death certificate is October 25, 1930.

## Gilmans Observe Golden Wedding At Family Home

### Reunion, Dinner and Religious Service Mark Celebration at Medford

Medford, Jan. 22.—(Special)—Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Gilman, pioneer Taylor county residents, celebrated their fiftieth wedding anniversary on Monday by renewing their marriage vows at an impressive service conducted by Father Reuter and by a family reunion and dinner. At the Holy Rosary Catholic church, where the religious service was held, the couple received the golden wedding blessing, and the children and grandchildren were extended the parental blessing.

Following the ceremony, a wedding dinner was served at the Gilman home, which was decorated in white and gold festoons caught with golden butterflies. The table was decorated with golden tapers and marigolds, the centerpiece being a huge wedding cake bearing the inscription, "Best Wishes, Jan. 20, 1880-1930", in golden letters, and 50 golden candles.

Many beautiful gifts were received by the honored couple. On Thursday evening a reception was given by the Catholic Order of Foresters, at which time Mrs. Gilman, a member of the order for many years, was presented with gold coins.

As a special favor to Mr. and Mrs. Gilman on their fiftieth wedding anniversary, "Silver Threads Among the Gold" was broadcast from radio station WLS at Chicago.

Mrs. Gilman wore a brown silk crepe dress trimmed with gold, and a gold locket, chain and brooch which she wore on her wedding day fifty years ago.

Among the guests present for the occasion were their two sons and two daughters, their 31 grandchildren and four great grandchildren.

On Jan. 20, 1880, Miss Barbara Ann Fox of Fond du Lac was united in marriage with Joseph Gilman, also of Fond du Lac at St. Louis' Catholic church in that city, Father Dale officiating. The bride was born April 3, 1857, at Mount Calvary, Wis., and the bridegroom was born Aug. 13, 1853, at Plattsburg, N. Y. He followed the occupation of millwright for many years.

After their marriage Mr. and Mrs. Gilman came to Taylor county to make their home. At that time the old Wisconsin Central railroad extended no farther than Medford, and Mr. Gilman tells many interesting tales of the old days when people carried lanterns by night and tin pans by day to keep the wolves from attacking them on their travels through the woods.

They came to their present place of residence in September, 1888. Six children were born to them, four of whom are living. They are: Mrs. G. B. Aschenbrener of Fifield, Wis.; Mrs. B. W. Shookman of Junction City; Albert J. Gilman and Thomas A. Gilman of Beach, N. D. A daughter, Mrs. Martha Jarchow, passed away five years ago, and a son, Joseph Edward, died in infancy.



# JOSEPH GILMAN 1930 PASSES AWAY

Old Resident Succumbs at Home  
Saturday After Long Illness

Joseph Gilman passed away at his home in Medford Saturday at the age of 77 years, 2 months, and 12 days. Death was due to dropsy, from which he had been suffering for the past six months.

Funeral services were held Monday morning at 9 o'clock at the Holy Rosary Catholic church, Father Reuter officiating, and he was laid to rest in the Medford Catholic cemetery. The pallbearers were Mark O. Malley, J. G. Mais, D. E. Wicker, V. A. Hirsch, John Werner, and John Kraemer.

Mr. Gilman was born August 13, 1853, at Plattsburg, New York. He spent his childhood in New York state and in Canada, and in 1870 moved with his parents to Wisconsin. He first came to Taylor county in 1875 and in 1880 he returned to Fond du Lac, where on January 20 of that year he was united in marriage to Miss Barbara Ann Fox. They lived on a farm four miles west of Stetsonville for a time and Mr. Gilman was also millwright at the mill there. He first came to Medford in 1887, then left and returned in 1893. The Gilmans have lived in their present residence opposite the court house since May 7, 1902. They celebrated their golden wedding anniversary January 20, 1930.

Besides his wife, four children survive Mr. Gilman, all of whom were present for the funeral. They are: Albert J. Gilman and Thomas A. Gilman, both of Beach, North Dakota; Mrs. G. B. Aschenbrenner of Fifiel; and Mrs. W. B. Shookman of Junction City. Two children preceded him in death, an infant son, Joseph Edward, who passed away July 8, 1890, and a daughter, Mrs. Martha Jarchow, who died October 1, 1924. He is also survived by two sisters, Mrs. Lucy Ronan of Fond du Lac, and Mrs. Eliza Furman of Rosendale. One sister, Mrs. Emma McFarland of Fond du Lac passed away just six weeks ago. There are also thirty grandchildren and four great grandchildren surviving.

Among those present from out of town for the funeral were the following: Mr. and Mrs. Steve Tepolt of Marshfield, Mrs. Tepolt is a niece of Mr. Gilman; Mrs. B. Bishop and daughter Miss Abbie of Westboro, Mrs. Bishop is also a niece; John Fox of Fond du Lac, a brother of Mrs. Gilman; Wallace Furman of Rosendale, a nephew of Mr. Gilman; Mrs. G. B. Aschenbrenner and son Frederic of Fifiel; Albert J. Gilman and daughter Kathryn and Thomas A. Gilman and daughter Bernice, all of Beach, North Dakota; and Mr. and Mrs. Wayne Shookman and son Junior of Junction City.

June 18, 1932

## Mrs. Gilman Dies Saturday at Hospital in Marshfield

Mrs. Barbara Ann Gilman, who had been a resident of Taylor county for more than half a century, died Saturday, June 18, at St. Joseph's hospital of Marshfield. She had been in ill health since last November when she went to live at the home of her daughter, Mrs. Wayne Shookman at Junction City, and was confined at the hospital for three months previous to her death, which was caused by tubercular pneumonia.

Barbara Ann Fox Gilman was born April 3, 1857, at Mt. Calvary, near Fond du Lac. She was married at St. Louis Catholic church at Fond du Lac on January 20, 1880, to Joseph (Continued on Page Seven)

(Continued from Page One)

Gilman, and the young couple came to Taylor county at that time.

They settled first on a homestead three miles west of Stetsonville, and thirty eight years ago they moved onto the Adams farm at the southeast corner of Medford. Thirty years ago they came into the city to live, at a house on Third street, which place has since been the family home.

Mr. Gilman died October 25, 1930.

Four children survive Mrs. Gilman: Thomas A., and Albert J., Beach, N. D., Durana Shookman, Junction City, and Etta Aschenbrenner, Fifiel. There are thirty two grandchildren, and 8 great grandchildren.

Two surviving sisters and one brother are: Mrs. Emma Henry, Mt. Calvary, Mrs. Mary Rebhausen, West Point, Neb., and Henry Fox, Chicago.

Funeral services were held from the Holy Rosary Catholic church at Medford yesterday, Wednesday, morning, and burial was made in the local Catholic cemetery. Rev. G. Reuter said the funeral mass.

Mrs. Gilman was a member of the Holy Rosary church, Women's Catholic Order of Foresters, Holy Rosary society and the Christian Mothers' society.

Pall bearers were Ralph Kostner, Peter K. Emmer, D. E. Wicker, Emil Weix, John Werner and John M. Zenner.

The out of town people who were here for the funeral services are as follows: Mrs. Stephen Tepolt, son Lyman and daughter Lucille, Marshfield; Mr. and Mrs. Homer Murray, Marshfield; Mrs. Tillie Bishop and daughters Bluebelle, Abbie, Bessie and Alice and Ignatius Wahl of Westboro; Mrs. Emma Henry, Mt. Calvary; Mr. and Mrs. F. Whetstein, Mrs. Lizzie Whetstein, and Miss Rosa Fox, all of Fond du Lac; Mr. and Mrs. Wayne Shookman and children, Junction City; Mr. and Mrs. Albert J. Gilman and infant daughter, and Gerald Gilman, Beach, N. D., and Mrs. Etta Aschenbrenner and son George Fifiel.