



Anthony (Tony) Gilchrist
(1888 - 1971)



A lumberjack, a lumber mill worker, an entrepreneur, Tony Gilchrist was a first generation Canadian born in Toronto on a cold (for Toronto) 28th day of January 1888. The temperature reached a high of only 7 degrees Fahrenheit (-13.9 C).



Noble & Emily

His father was a Scot-Irish immigrant, Noble Gilchrist, who had been brought to Ontario as a babe-in-arms from Fermanagh, Ulster, Ireland in 1856. His mother was an English immigrant, Emily Mary Crux, who had arrived as an 11-year-old with parents and siblings in June 1871. The Gilchrist and Crux families lived in Etobicoke when first they arrived in Ontario, and Tony's parents married on 22 January 1879. Tony was the fourth of nine children.

The Noble Gilchrist family lived in Toronto in a number of locations until moving in about 1895 when Tony was 7 years old to a rented farm near Emsdale, Ontario. About a year later, his father Noble purchased a farm in Bethune Township near Kearney in Parry Sound District where the family settled down to farm life. The family is recorded in the 1901 census for

Bethune Township under the spelling of Gilgrist.

His older sister Clara at the age of 16 took employment as a domestic in the town of Parry Sound, at the home of Robert G. Ard who was the manager of Vincent's store. Tony visited Clara in Parry Sound on occasions while he "was a kid", as he said. He also, as a young teen, came over from Kearney to work during the summers at Depot Harbour, a small harbour community located on Parry Island. At the age of sixteen, while working in the bush as a lumberjack, Tony had his throat cut by an axe head which had flown off its handle while being used by another lumberjack. His life was saved by the prompt action of his fellow workers who stuffed the wound with "puffball" fungi to staunch the bleeding.

While he was recuperating from this accident, he stayed for a time in Parry Sound with Clara, who now was married. He met his future bride, Isabella (Belle) Brown, while staying at Clara's. Belle used to deliver milk to Clara's house.



Isabella

But Tony met with another accident which nearly cost him a hand. Tony explained that after recuperating from his throat wound: "Then I went out to Bob McCullough's in the Fall in the bush, and I got my wrist cut there. Then of course the next year after I got over that I came up (to Parry Sound)... and went to work in the mill. I started cleaning up first, then I went to work on the edger. I was running the edger when the mill burned down ... When I came up here and started to work in the mill was in 1906. I was working in the mill that year and the next year when they were building that big bridge there, and you'll see on the big bridge '1907'."

"I worked for \$40 a month. That was what I got at first. Then I got on the edger and then I got \$2.50 a day. Big money." "I edged lumber in the three mills. I started in the water mill. Then I went from the water mill to Peter's. I went up to Biscotasing the year we were married (1911). I edged lumber there and got \$3.00 a day there. Then I came down here and stayed at [Bill Brown's, his father-in-law] the first night. [Bill] came home about midnight and asked if I would go to work the next morning - they needed an edgerman at Peter's mill ... So of course I went right over there.... I worked there until the

mill closed down that Fall and I went back in the Spring ... and I edged lumber there ... all that summer and part of the next (until) they ran out of lumber, out of logs."



Conger Mill

Fortunately for Tony, the edger at the Conger mill had just quit. Tony decided to go over to that mill after his boss at Peter's told him: "We'll be shut down for a week. You go over there and try it. If you can do it and want to stay, all well and good. But if you don't, come back here and your job's here for you, anytime."

"So I went over" Tony continued, "and put in the first day, and as I was coming out over the rollers Mr. Yates says to me: 'How do you like it, Tony?' I said: 'All right,

but I'd like it better if there was a little more money in it.' (There was 50 cents a day more in it as it was!) He said: 'We'll give you another 25 cents (\$3.25)'. 'You're on', I said. 'I'll stay.' "

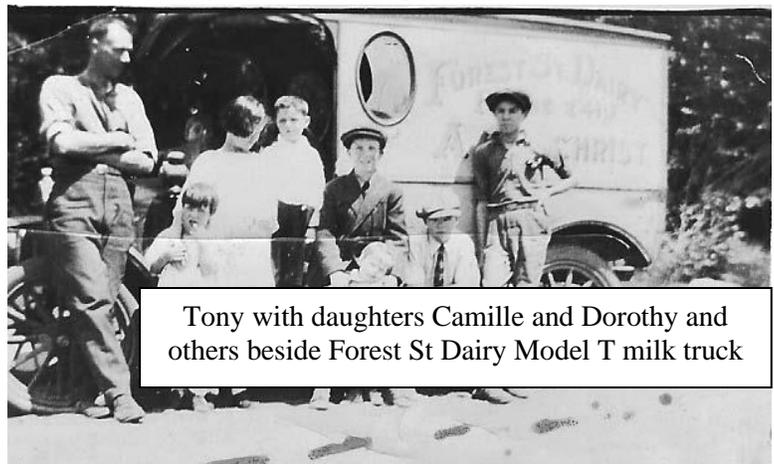
Tony stayed at the Conger mill until he bought the Forest Street Dairy in 1916.

After Tony and Belle returned to Parry Sound from Biscotasing, they arranged with Belle's parents to purchase the Brown's house on Forest Street. It was the house in which Belle had been born. A Mr. Davis and his son-in-law Mr. Thomas had a dairy operation next door. "And he wanted to sell out and go over to the States. He wanted me to buy it - \$1000 for a horse and 5 cows and an old democrat. ... I had a good job offered me up at Webwood, \$5.00 a day and a free house and wood, edging lumber. Mom [Belle] wanted me to take that but I wanted to get the darn dairy!"

Tony didn't have the money to buy the dairy, so his father-in-law Bill Brown said he would go half on it if Tony could get the other \$500. According to Belle, her mother Mary Jane actually put up the full \$1,000 - \$500 on behalf of her husband and the other \$500 on behalf of her son-in-law Tony.

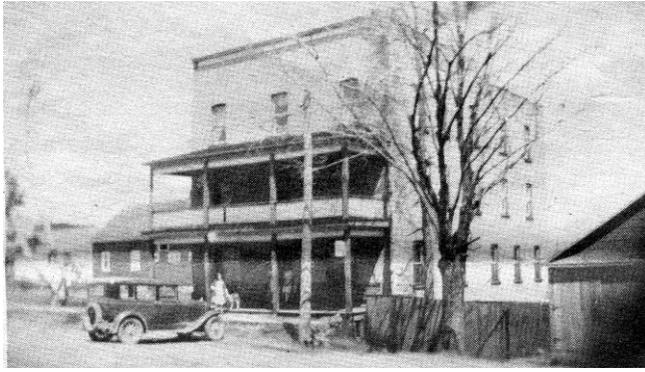
The dairy was a successful venture for Tony. He described his first couple of years in the business this way: "I had 12 (cows) for awhile. I only had 5 when I bought it. I had 12 and bought what milk I could besides, around, but had to go out and get it all the time. They wouldn't bring it in to me."

"The second winter I was in it, I got on the phone and phoned some farmers down at Breckin. One of them was Donald Gilchrist (no relation) and the other was a fellow name of Lumering(?). Heck, they sent me all the milk I wanted for what I was paying for it and going out to the country for it. They had lots of milk, good milk too. Then I had milk for everybody. And that was the first time in the history of Parry Sound that they had milk in the wintertime. I used to go across the ice to Depot Harbour two days a week. ...(I charged) ten cents a bottle when I started. Then I raised it to 14 cents when I went to Depot Harbour. It was 12 here (Parry Sound)."



Tony with daughters Camille and Dorothy and others beside Forest St Dairy Model T milk truck

He remained in the dairy business until 1925. Following the death of his father-in-law Bill Brown,



Tony bought the Kitchener House from his widowed mother-in-law. This launched Tony into another career as the owner and operator of what for many years was the Kitchener Hotel at 27 Gibson Street. The Parry Sound Municipal Building was built next to the Hotel on the corner of Gibson and Sequin St. During the Depression and the war years, Tony operated a taxi service from the hotel, meeting passenger trains when they arrived, at all hours of the day and night. He also met the American cruise ships, the North

American, South American and Georgian, and drove tourists over to Calendar to see the Dionne Quintuplets. For a time, he used a 7-passenger Packard limousine.

Tony was active in the community of Parry Sound in other ways, as well. He served as a Councillor on the Town Council some 15 different years from 1930 to 1954. He belonged to the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, the Masons and the Orange Lodge. He participated as a side-



drummer in many 12th of July parades around the District. And he was a keen curler whose prowess on the ice earned him considerable respect throughout the District. For a number of years he looked after the Parry Sound Curling rink which in those days was just across the street from the hotel. In the summer months, he operated a car storage facility in the curling rink building where summer tourists could leave their cars while staying at their cottages and lodges on Georgian Bay.



Tony with 1936 Willy's Knight taxi cab

He remained active in the hotel business until the late 1940's when his son Bill came into the business, first as the hotel manager and then as its proprietor. Tony enjoyed his retirement at his cottage on the Parry Sound of Georgian Bay which he had built himself (with family's and friends' help) starting in 1947. He remained an active gardener and bowler in his senior years. Tony died in the Parry Sound General Hospital on June 1st, 1971. He was 83. He was predeceased by a son Kendall (1927 – 1928) and a daughter Dorothy (1913 – 1966) and survived by his wife Belle, daughters Mary and Camille and sons William (Bill) and Lawrence (Larry).

