

**ROBERT L.
GILLINGHAM**
1903-1988

Robert L. Gillingham, 85 of Caseville, a longtime prominent local businessman, passed away Friday, Dec. 2 following a lengthy illness.

Mr. Gillingham was a descendant in a long line of business owners, commercial fishermen, realtors and Thumb promoters. He ran the Gillingham Fish Company of Bay Port with his late brother, John, owned North Island Fish Company of Caseville, and R. L. Gillingham Real Estate of Caseville, and was past president of Peoples Oil and Gas Company of Pigeon.

Long active in promoting the Thumb for tourism and vacationing, Gillingham was president of East Michigan Tourist Association in 1943, headquartered in Bay City.

The family was in commercial fishing on Saginaw Bay prior to the Civil War, as their schooners worked on Wildfowl Bay before Bay Port was established. At one time the family fleet numbered more than 20 vessels and fish from Saginaw and Wildfowl Bay were shipped to New York, Boston and Chicago.

A series of fires around the time of World War II caused the company to suspend commercial fishing. At that time the industry went into decline as the large volume of Walleye, Perch and Herring fishing deteriorated. The Gillingham involvement in fishing ended in 1968.

Mr. Gillingham was an accomplished violinist who began collecting hand-made instruments, until he had about 30. He often loaned the instruments to students in areas all across the country. He told how he received his first violin from his father in 1914, and he took the train from Bay Port to Sebawaing for violin lessons.

He was graduated from University of Michigan Law School in 1929, and was admitted to the State Bar of Michigan the same year. He was a member of F&AM and a past member of FOE.

He is survived by his wife, Mabel Marie, one son, Robert G. Gillingham of Carlsbad, CA, two daughters, Nancy Gremel of Sebawaing and Wanda Quinn of Bloomfield Hills, seven grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren, and one sister, Margaret DeSmit of Frankenmuth.

Funeral services were conducted at 11 a.m. Tuesday, Dec. 6 in Shetler-Bussema Funeral Home, Pigeon. Rev. Fred O. Kenkle officiated, with burial in the New Bay Port Cemetery. A Masonic service was held Monday evening at the funeral

