



Yonge Street Meetinghouse — 1810

# Newsletter

CANADIAN FRIENDS HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

60 LOWTHER AVENUE, TORONTO, ONTARIO M5R 1C7

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## UXBRIDGE QUAKER MEETING HOUSE 1820

A good example of board and batten construction, this Meeting House was erected in 1820 to replace an earlier log structure. The building stands in the midst of the original Uxbridge Quaker Settlement, a venture begun in 1805 by some twelve families from Pennsylvania. The unaffected design of the building reflects the Quaker philosophy of plainness and restraint. The Uxbridge Settlement prospered until the mid-nineteenth century when the Quaker population declined. Closed in 1925, the Meeting House has since been re-opened for annual interdenominational religious services. In the adjoining cemetery on "Quaker Hill" are buried some of the area's earliest settlers, including Joseph Gould, a noted local industrialist and parliamentarian.

--Plaque erected by Historic Sites Board  
of Ontario. Unveiled on June 18, 1972.



## THE UXBRIDGE QUAKER MEETING HOUSE

Kathleen Hertzberg

I was first made aware of the Quaker Meeting House in Uxbridge Township about 18 years ago by Marion Cronk, the last surviving member of the Pickering Monthly Meeting. Having settled ourselves in the Pickering district about that time, we were very sad that the Quaker Meetings in both Pickering and Uxbridge had been laid down, yet we found encouragement and inspiration as Quakers from our friendship with Marion Cronk and from the visits we paid with her and with our small children to this Meeting House to share short periods of silent worship together after the manner of Friends and to talk with her about Quaker history in the area. Over the years there were several alarms when there seemed a danger of the Meeting House being sold. It is with a sense of thankfulness as Friends that we participate in today's ceremony of unveiling of the plaque marking the Meeting House as an historic site. Marion Cronk, known for many years in the district as a public-minded Quaker, would have been very happy to be here today.

I have been asked to give a brief outline of the history of the Meeting House.

The present board and batten Meeting House was completed in 1820, replacing an earlier log structure, circa. 1809. This was almost two centuries after the rise of Quakerism in mid-seventeenth century England. George Fox had called men to seek a direct inner religious experience because God had placed in every human being an "Inner Light" which he taught was the living Spirit of God in Christ. The Quaker movement was like an eruption within the established order; it challenged many religious forms and beliefs and battled the social evils of the times. Consequently, Quakers suffered great persecution and many emigrated to the American colonies,

particularly to Pennsylvania, the state founded by the Quaker, William Penn. The twelve Quaker families who originally migrated to Canada from Pennsylvania and settled in 1805 in Uxbridge, were refugees from the American War of Independence. Many Quaker families around this time migrated to Upper Canada and founded Quaker settlements. They may also be considered as part of the great western migration of Friends in America. By 1810 there were 1,000 Quakers in Canada. Faithful to the Quaker peace testimony, they regarded the American War of Independence and all war as contrary to the Spirit of Christ. They were against war and against violent revolution. At the same time, as subjects of England, they had been exempt by special law from military service, one of the rights which Quakers had won through severe persecution. Thus as an integral part of their Christian faith, they were against war for conscience sake and were mostly either neutral or loyal to England. They were often regarded with suspicion by both sides of the conflict and many suffered great hardship. The events of the times in which they lived, including slavery, challenged the faith and conscience of many Quakers in America. It was also a time of spiritual revival. Many Friends were led to seek new areas of settlement where they could attempt to put their faith into practice and establish true Christian communities. Their closely-knit, devout communities with strict discipline of plain living, plain speaking, hard work and responsible citizenship, made them welcome settlers. The spirit which animated them made it possible to endure the incredible hardships of the first pioneers who settled in Uxbridge around 1805, when the dense pine forest which covered the area had first to be cleared. Uxbridge Township was the most northerly limit of white settlement. The long Quaker tradition of friendship with the Indians stood our first Quaker settlers here in good stead, for "none could make them afraid". The first Quaker Meeting for

Worship was held in 1806 in the home of Charles Chapman, a little more than a year after the arrival of the families, a tribute to the central place worship held in their lives. By 1808 the Minutes of the Meeting record that Friends were discussing the best place for the Meeting House and burial ground and "were united to place on the NE corner of lot No. 29 in the 5th concession of the Township"--in the wording of the Minute. A lot was also provided for the burial ground. Trustees were appointed to take care of the property. An original log Meeting House was built in 1808-1809 on the present site. The Quaker Meeting House was the first building in Uxbridge for public worship.

In 1818 a regular Meeting for Worship and Preparative Meeting (in Quaker terminology) had been set up by the superior Meeting at Yonge Street. The Minutes of the Uxbridge Preparative Meeting (1817-1840) are in the Quaker archives. Commencing in 1817 we read the first entries appointing certain Friends "to provide board and funds for the Meeting House". This Minute is continued to 1820, the date considered to be when the present frame Meeting House was completed, replacing the earlier log structure.

In the church organizational structure of Quakers, by 1820 the Uxbridge Meeting was a Preparative Meeting of Yonge Street Monthly Meeting of Canada Half-Yearly Meeting of the mother New York Yearly Meeting. Then came the first Great Separation in 1828, a theological controversy and inner conflict which swept the Quakers of the time, leading in America and in Canada to permanent divisions which formed different branches of Quakers. In England on the whole, these divisions and subsequent controversies were absorbed into a main-stream of Quaker thought. In Canada the three different branches of Quakers united in 1955 to form one Canadian Yearly Meeting. Due to these divisions, a second Meeting House was built in

Uxbridge in 1844. The present frame building here on Quaker Hill was retained by the 'orthodox-conservative' Friends. In 1814 Canada Half Yearly Meeting (Orthodox) organised Uxbridge and Pickering into one Monthly Meeting, which became, due to decline in numbers, Pickering Executive Meeting in 1836.

On 17th May, 1925, Pickering Monthly Meeting recorded a minute recommending to Canada Yearly Meeting that the Uxbridge Meeting be laid down "as most of the members of the Uxbridge Meeting have allied themselves with other churches". This was a feature in the decline of rural Quakerism in Canada. Quaker trustees were appointed to "have charge of all funds and property, legal and other important papers" to work with the trustees of the Uxbridge Meeting House who were then no longer in membership.

Thus, 120 years after the first Quaker settlers blazed the pioneer trail to Uxbridge, faithful, devout and intrepid, the Quaker community has ceased to be. The events of the times through which the four generations of Quakers who succeeded the first settlers lived, not least the two great separations in Quakerism itself, gradually weakened the sense of community amongst Friends; isolated as they were for many years on the frontier, the sense of a particular Quaker identity became indistinct and their descendants lost the sense of corporate belonging.

From a study of the material available, including the Minutes of the Meeting, it is evident that from this Meeting House Quakers continued for over 100 years to worship in silence after the manner of Friends and they they were moved to express their religious concerns for peace, slavery, the Indians, for education and for the development of the wider Uxbridge civic community which grew up around them. Thus they made their contribution to education, farming, business and to politics, very much moved and inspired by their life as a Quaker community and by the Quaker heritage of social concern. We can learn from their devoutness and endurance and from their

Quaker pioneering spirit, as well as from their mistakes.

In looking back to this historic site, Quakers today in Canada find that they share the same concerns as their spiritual forebearers, living as we do for the main part, no longer in the rural communities but in the urban areas of the twentieth century.

"This is the word of the Lord to you all and a charge to you in the presence of the Living God; be examples in all countries, places, islands, nations, wherever you come...then you will come to walk cheerfully over the world, answering to that of God in every man."

--Journal of George Fox

The above article is the text of a talk given by Kathleen Hertzberg, member of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), at the ceremony of the unveiling of the plaque marking the Quaker Meeting House, Quaker Hill, Uxbridge Township, Ontario, on Sunday June 18, 1972. The text was prepared from original deeds, minutes and other materials of the Uxbridge, Pickering and Canada Yearly Meetings now in the Quaker Archives, University of Western Ontario, London, as well as from "The History of the Society of Friends in Canada" by Arthur J. Dorland.

#### NEWS AND NOTES

##### Inventory of the Quaker Archives at the University of Western Ontario

Edward Phelps, Special Collections Librarian at the University of Western Ontario, London, has completed a preliminary inventory of the Quaker records, deeds, and other materials in the archives. The inventory is still incomplete, with several areas of research necessary before the

inventory can be published in a more permanent format. The inventory needs to be harmonized, i.e. the records need to be checked to be sure they are in the correct order. Minute books did not often make a clear distinction as to what one of the three Quaker groups they pertained to. There is also a need to annotate the inventory with dates when the various Meetings were formed and, in some instances, laid down. There are several Friends who are working on the inventory. In the meantime, xerox copies of the inventory are available to those who may find reference to the inventory of use. The copies are not available for further duplication or for publication. For further information, contact either Edward Phelps, or the Canadian Friends Historical Association.

#### Split Second View of Uxbridge Meeting House on T.V.

Television crews were present at the unveiling of the plaque at the Uxbridge Meeting House and made a considerable amount of 'footage' of the proceedings for further televising. The Historical Association was informed that T.V. viewers could see the Meeting House on the programme Images of Canada on March 14, 1973. Viewers who were smart enough to catch a glimpse of the split second view of the Meeting House will appreciate the setting of the Meeting House. We had expected more of the ceremony to be televised.

#### Quaker Costume for the Royal Ontario Museum (Toronto, Ontario)

There is no example of Canadian Quaker costume in the extensive textile collection of the Royal Ontario Museum. An inquiry by the Historical Association has resulted in an invitation for us to provide authentic Quaker costumes for the Museum. A wide variety of traditional Quaker costume and furniture would be of interest to the Museum and Friends

who have Canadiana, or who know of people who do, are asked to contact the Historical Association. We are interested in preserving our Quaker heritage and are willing to cooperate with individuals in having Quaker materials deposited in safe places, where they may be consulted by the larger Canadian public, but at the same time preserved from deterioration and ultimate loss.

#### Research In Progress

There are two research projects currently in progress. Albert Martin, of Hamilton, Ontario, is working on the History of the Hamilton Friends Meeting, and Jack Ross, of St. John's, Newfoundland, is researching the early contacts of Quakers in that province. There is an interesting account of a Quaker handling in a non-violent manner, of a military situation near St. John's in 1700's.

We are interested to know of Quaker research in progress, and the Association will attempt to facilitate such research in whatever way possible. From time to time we will publish notes on research in progress in our newsletter and readers are invited to keep us informed about their research.

We also welcome articles for publication in our newsletter. For further information contact the editor: David Newlands, at the address listed for the Association.

#### Report on Meeting of Executive Committee

The Executive Committee continues to work on a number of vital aspects for firmly establishing our new Historical Association. These include expanding the executive committee membership, developing by-laws and a constitution, and establishing priorities in our publishing and research plans. A decision to improve the format of our Newsletter is reflected in the current issue of the Newsletter.



Membership and Financial Reports

Membership now stands at thirty. This is much too small. We need help, financially, work wise, and moral support. Many who have expressed an interest in the Friends Historical Association have not yet joined. General membership costs \$5, while honorary (65 years and over) and student memberships are \$2. Membership applications and further information are available from Dorothy Muma, Treasurer, Canadian Friends Historical Assn., 60 Lowther Avenue, Toronto, Ontario M5R 1C7.

The financial statement for the period August 1, 1971 to February 15, 1973 is as follows:

Receipts:

Memberships:			
General, individuals	\$ 83.00		
Meetings	20.00		
Life	<u>100.00</u>	\$203.00	
Donations		<u>7.25</u>	
		<u>\$210.25</u>	

Payments:

Postage, stationery and supplies	<u>14.71</u>
<u>Balance at Bank (Feb. 15, 1973)</u>	<u>\$195.54</u>

--Dorothy Muma, Treasurer

Date of Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting of the Canadian Friends Historical Association will be held on Friday, August 18, 1973 at 3:30 p.m. at Niagara Christian College, R.R. #1, Fort Erie, Ontario. Members are invited to attend this Meeting.

Next Issue of Newsletter

The next issue of this newsletter will be published in June (Sixth

Month) and will contain two features: A History of Canadian Young Friends and Camp KeeKaukis (Waubashene, Ontario) for years 1931 to 1950: An annotated list of Canadian Quaker Historical Materials in the Friends House Library, Toronto. There will be a number of news notes, including an interim report on the Index of Canadian Quaker Names now being compiled, and further research projects in progress.

---Fifth Month 3, 1973.  
David Newlands, Editor.