

Address by Kathleen Hertzberg

**At the Annual Meeting of the
Canadian Friends Historical Association
held at Uxbridge, Ontario, Saturday, 18th September, 2004.**

*“A People without a history is not re-
deemed from time.” T.S. Eliot.*

I want to share with you some of the background of how I (and my family) became involved in the history of this delightful, original Quaker Meeting House.

The Hertzberg family emigrated from Europe in 1952 and settled in Dunbarton (Pickering) where my husband, Fritz Hertzberg, established his medical practice in 1954. At that time we had two small children, Eve and Andreas, (and later Martin). We were aware that Quakers were early settlers in Pickering and that Pickering College was once there; the Quaker Meeting House in the village of Pickering, had been sold to the Masons in 1942.

We were fortunate to get to know Marion Cronk and Elizabeth Richardson, the last surviving members of the Pickering Meeting. We were looking for a cottage in the Uxbridge Hills as a retreat from a very busy medical practice. We did find an old farm house in the Uxbridge Hills with a glorious view over Lake

Scugog and far over the surrounding countryside.

Marion Cronk made us aware of the Uxbridge Quaker Meeting House built by the early Quaker settlers, but there was no longer a Quaker Meeting there. It was cared for by a local Committee with whom we made contact. From time to time, we held a Meeting for Worship there - our family and Marion Cronk.

In early 1969, we were shocked when we heard that the Meeting House was to be purchased by a representative of Coca Cola Canada, dismantled and erected on his property in the United States. This led to some action on my part and I believe on the part of the Meeting House Committee.

At that time, the Canadian Friends Historical Association did not exist. Enquires for support from Canadian Yearly Meeting and other Friends in the endeavour secure the Meeting House for posterity and to stop the possible sale, did not produce results. An appeal to the Ontario Department of Public Records, supported by the local



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 inter-denominational 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.

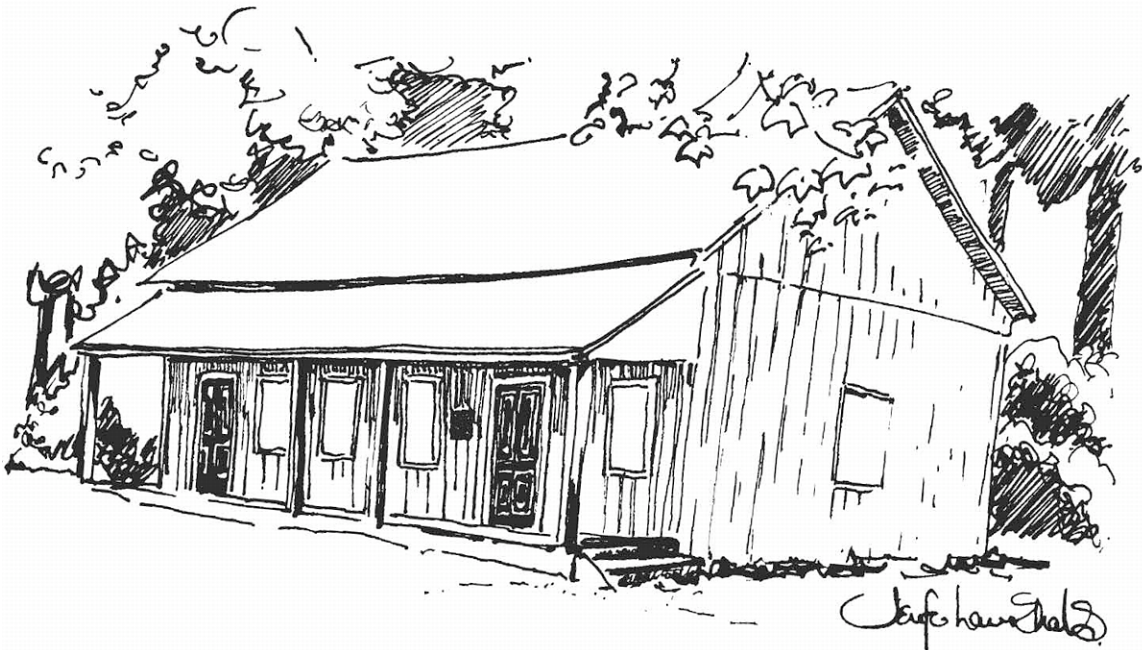
Meeting House Committee, resulted in an application and then the erection of an "Historic Plaque" describing and marking the building on the site. The ceremony took place on 18th June 1972. After this, nothing more seemed to have been heard about removing the Meeting House to the United States.

Inter-denominational worship services have taken place every year since. It has been a moving experience to be invited to speak from time to time and to have contact with the dedicated local committee who make the arrangements and who care for the building.

the US who gave the Association support and advice - Barbara Curtis from the Haverford Collection and Elizabeth Moger from the New York Yearly Meeting Collection, as well as all those who helped to launch the Association.

Of course, it was a great event when the Canadian Yearly Meeting Records, assembled by Arthur Dorland, were moved from the University of Western Ontario to Pickering College and the Dorland

Room was established - above all, when Jane Zavitz-Bond became the Canadian



Out of this and experiences with other Quaker historic sites, grew the awareness of the need for a Canadian Friends Historical Association. "What we need is a Canadian Friends Historical Association" - Grace Pincoe and Kathleen Hertzberg said to each other on the stairs in Friends House, Toronto. With the support of Arthur Dorland (the Quaker historian), the Inaugural Meeting took place on August 19, 1972 at Pickering College, Newmarket, Ontario, at the time of Canadian Yearly Meeting.

I would like to remember Friends from

Yearly Meeting archivist and now chairman of the CFHA.

I have made some copies of the first and second issues of the CFHA Newsletter (edited by David Newlands) in which the plaquing ceremony is recorded, and the speech I was asked to give on that occasion. I will read a few paragraphs and ask you as members of the Association, to continue to give your support and interest to the Association. As well, I give my personal thanks to all those whose service keeps the Association going.

The Uxbridge Quaker Meeting House¹

I was first made aware of the Quaker Meeting House in Uxbridge Township about 18 years ago [1954] 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 from Pennsylvania to Canada and settled in Uxbridge in 1805 were refugees from the American War of Independence. Around this time, many Quaker families 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 wars 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

¹ The following 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 in the Quaker Archives in 1972 at the University of Western Ontario, London, as well as from *The History of the Society of Friends in Canada* by Arthur G. Dorland.

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 1808-09 on the present site. The Quaker Meeting House was the first building for public worship in Uxbridge.

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 1842, Canada Half-Yearly Meeting (Orthodox) organised Uxbridge and Pickering into one Monthly Meeting which became, due to decline in numbers, Pickering Executive Meeting in 1886.

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 that 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 in Canada today find that they share the same concerns as their spiritual forebears, 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