

**Bus Tour of Uxbridge Township  
CFHA Annual Meeting  
Sept. 18, 2004.**



Our bus tour began at the Uxbridge Historical Centre on Quaker Hill which is a mile west of the old Uxbridge Town. One of the main museum buildings there is the former Quaker Hill School which is the third school building on the site. The first was a log school built by a neighbouring Quaker, Eze-

kial James, in 1817. It was used at least twice in the 1830s by Rev. Adam Elliot, an Anglican Minister, for services, and he mentioned that several Quakers attended. He stayed over night with Mr. James.

Also, the museum site is part of the original Jonathan Gold farm. This was another Quaker pioneer family from Pennsylvania. A son Joseph, who was born there in 1808, became Uxbridge's leading citizen. He was a mill owner, merchant, parliamentarian, and entrepreneur, and was a leader of the rebels from the area during the Upper Canada Rebellion.

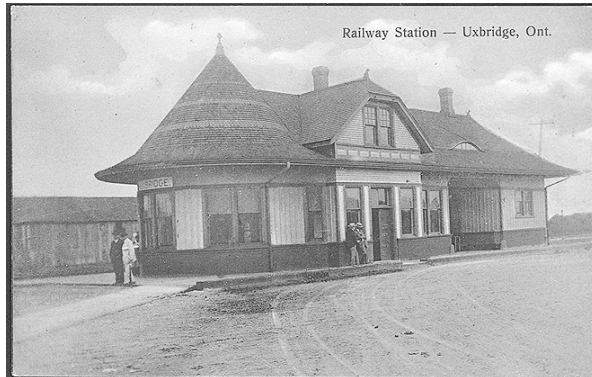
Although the local Meeting House closed in 1925, the "Quaker" name continues to be used by merchants and developers. The sub-



York-Durham Heritage Railway

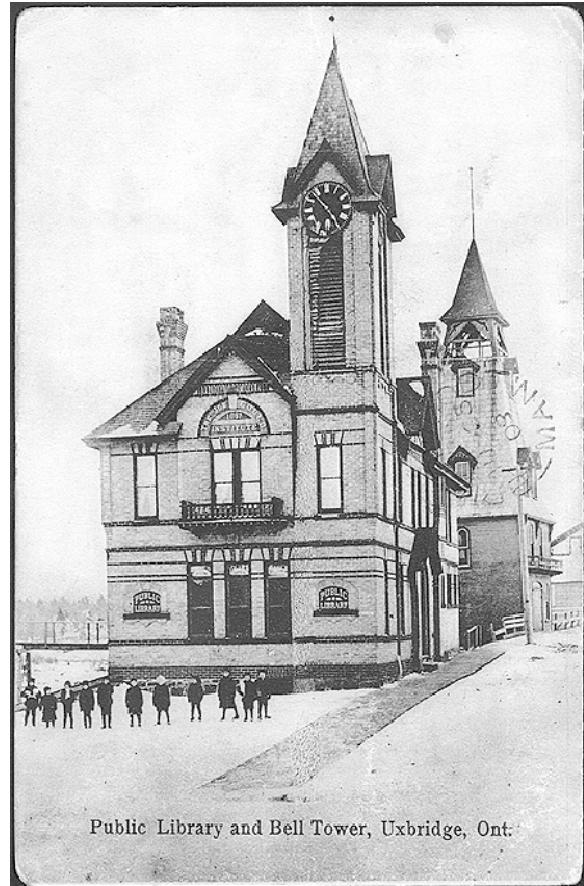
division that has grown between the museum and Uxbridge Town is called Quaker Village.

We then travelled south to Durham Road 8, then east into Uxbridge Town, and turned north on Railway Street to drive by the Uxbridge Station. It was built in 1904, and has been restored for use as a station and museum for the York-Durham Heritage Railway. Just as we approached the station the train whistle blew. We were just in time to pause and watch the train come in.



Our next stop was in Centennial Park. That is where the town of Uxbridge began. Dr. Beswick had started a dam and mills there about 1806, and soon sold to a young Quaker, Joseph Collins Jr. Mr. Collins finished the mills which he operated until he was tragically killed in a mill accident in 1815. His mother was probably the first woman to live on the site of Uxbridge Town. Joseph's account book for the mills is in safe keeping in the Canadian Yearly Meeting Archives at Pickering College. Thus we have a record of the first business in Uxbridge, which gives us some insight as to what was happening in the infant settlement.

We also saw the outside of Uxbridge Public Library that sits nearby. Joseph Gould provided the plans and money to have it built, which was originally called the Joseph Gould Institute.



The Joseph Gould Institute/Uxbridge Public Library

Our route then took us south on Bascom Street to Mill Street. There we saw Elgin Pond where Joseph Gould built saw, and woollen mills. The kiln building was built for drying oats for an oatmeal mill is now a house.



Also in Centennial Park is a kiosk which marks the TransCanada Trail. This trail enters Uxbridge Town from the northeast and



travels south through the town.

We then travelled south on Concession Road 7 past Elgin Park where Sir John A. Macdonald spoke at a campaign picnic in 1876. We could imagine the scene.



About a mile further south, we turned onto Brookdale Road where we saw reforestation that had been planted over 70 years ago. This forest area had once been fields of blow sand. There are several prominent houses in the Brookdale area that had been summer homes of people from Toronto like Hartley Dewart, who was Liberal leader of Ontario about 1920, and publisher George Morang. Sir William Mulock was a member of the Brookdale Angling Club that started here, in the 1890s.

We retraced the route to the 7<sup>th</sup> Concession Road, and went south. The road was gradually going uphill as we were climbing the north slope of the Oak Ridges Moraine. Much reforestation was evident, and we soon passed the Durham Regional Forest Headquarters. This organization had started as the Ontario County Forest in the early 1920s with the aim of reforesting the sandy soil-- of which there was a lot in the township.

We travelled through the Pine Grove area which was the last part of the township to be settled because the soil was poor. The Pine Grove Church, built in 1878, was known as "The Wilderness Appointment" of the Uxbridge Methodist Church. More recently it was sometimes used during the filming of

Road to Avonlea.



Another site along the route was that of "gravel pits" or quarries. There is a lot of gravel extraction on the moraine in Uxbridge Township, and many pit owners are now doing a good job of landscaping their lands adjacent to the roadways.

South of Durham Road 21, we saw the Oak Ridges Moraine Hiking Trail which follows the moraine from one end to the other. Here in Uxbridge Township, the Oak Ridges Trail intersects with the TransCanada Trail, making this a very key area in Ontario.

As we reached the summit of the moraine we passed "Big Ben," the highest point in the township which was called after Ben Nevis in Scotland. It is the location of Skyloft Ski Club which dates back many decades to when it was owned by the Toronto Ski Club. Skiers used to come by train to a little station which was a couple of miles to the south. Local residents would bring them to the ski hills by horse and sleigh. To the east is Lakeridge Ski Resort and to the southeast is Dagmar.

As we headed down the south slope of the moraine, we went through the Glen Major area. This was a former "sawmill town," and only a few houses, a church, a former school, and two ponds are left. This is the home of the Glen Major Angling Club which started over 100 years ago.

We then went south into Pickering Town-

ship to Balsam, and then west to connect with the 6<sup>th</sup> Concession of Uxbridge. We headed north up over the moraine. Along the way we passed several “kettle ponds” which were depressions left when the last glacier melted. We also saw several connections to an intricate trail system that allows hikers to enjoy the Walker Woods. James Walker, a Toronto lawyer, bought a small piece of land on the 6<sup>th</sup> Concession in 1934. As nearby, unproductive farms came up for sale, he bought them, and over time he planted thousands of trees. In 1991, the Metro Toronto & Region Conservation Authority acquired over 1000 acres of Mr. Walker’s land.

At the height of the moraine, we went along a section of road that curves through a thick woods. The road there is supposed to be only as wide as the wheel tracks. This is a beautiful area at any time of the year. It was especially lovely today... our day.

As we continued north, we saw the farm where the outdoor set for the Road to Avonlea was located. This is the former Nesbitt farm,

and the house and barn which are still there were used for the King farmhouse and barn. Even the lighthouses seen in the program were here, far from the ocean.

At Wagg Road, we turned west. The property on the north side of the road, originally 200 acres, was granted, in 1805, to Elijah Collins, a Quaker, who is supposed to have been the first settler in the township. The next two farms to the north were granted to Quakers, James Hughes and George Webb. We turned north at Highway 47, and shortly turned onto the Old Stouffville Road which crossed the former Hughes and Webb properties. This was one of the settlement roads in the days of the early Uxbridge Quaker community.

We could see that the land here was very sandy, and much of it had been reforested. Apparently another of the Webb brothers was to get a lot in the township, but he didn’t like what he found when he came to see it, and he went back to Yonge Street.

A few years ago, the owner of properties



in this area planned to build a large town on them which would have been as big as Uxbridge Town. Fortunately a group of well-organized citizens opposed this development and it was eventually set aside. This land is a part of the moraine which needs to be protected.

We then went north on the 6<sup>th</sup> Concession Road and stopped at the Friends Meeting House where Ron Gould, a descendant of the Quaker Goulds, invited us inside. There Kathleen Hertzberg ably shared some of the history of the Meeting House, and her role in saving it from getting into private hands. This Meeting House, built in 1820, is a provincial historic site, and Kathleen played a main part in having it designated.

Across the road, we looked at the Friends Burial Ground which dates from 1809, and is the final resting place of our Quaker pioneers. Joseph Gould was buried there as well as Isaac James who was murdered in 1828. Plots are still available for anyone with Quaker roots, and a recent burial was of Ward Cornell who was once a host on Hockey Night in Canada.

We boarded the bus and returned to the Historical Centre for refreshments and a tour of the buildings.