

200 Years in Uxbridge Township

Courtesy of Uxbridge Times-Journal

By Allan McGillivray

UXBRIDGE -- Two hundred years ago, some adventurous Quaker families left Pennsylvania, and travelled slowly northward, eventually arriving at the young settlement in the Newmarket and Aurora area of Young Street. Their final destination was the northeast part of Uxbridge Township, where they set about making farm clearings in the woods. Over the next few years, others joined them, and the settlement that developed into the Uxbridge Township of today was underway.

The War of 1812 brought development in Upper Canada to a stop for a while, but it picked up again by the mid-1820s. Other Americans started arriving in the township, and the hamlet that grew into Uxbridge Town was born. By the 1830s, folks from the British Isles added to the growing population. However, there again was turmoil as the Upper Canada Rebellion unfolded in 1837, and a number of Uxbridge settlers spent time in jail because of their involvement.

The area of Uxbridge Township north of Davis Drive, known as Scott Township, was born in 1807, but it was in the hands of absentee owners until the early 1830s when a handful of Scottish pioneers moved into the 6th Concession area.

After Lord Durham made his report about the Rebellion, the government in Upper Canada was reformed, and this was the beginning of the government we have in Canada today. Boom times arrived in the 1840s accompanied by the building of mills and other businesses. This reached a greater peak in the 1850s. The Crimean War was taking place on the other side of the world, but that brought prosperity here because of the sale and exporting of wheat. Hamlets started to grow in the rural areas.

By the early 1860s, the Uxbridge hamlet had enough people that it became a police village. Although still part of the township for municipal purposes, it was allowed to elect a committee to oversee things like policing.

The arrival of the Toronto and Nipissing railway in the early 1870s brought the Toronto market to Uxbridge's door, and the police village received another spurt of growth. It became a village in 1872, and 100 years later we celebrated with Uxpo '72. Town status arrived in 1885, and the new town was finally allowed to elect its own mayor and council.

Uxbridge Town by this time had a railway car factory, piano and organ factory, sash and door factories, a foundry, and lots of stores and other businesses. Even some of the hamlets had their own wagon shops.

The population of the Uxbridge and Scott areas reached a peak about this time. Every lot had at least one house and a family. By then, the phrase “go west” was being heard, and over the next decades many pulled up stakes and moved in that direction. The population really didn’t increase again until after the Second World War.

Like everywhere else, Uxbridge and Scott struggled through the Depression years of the late 1920s and the 1930s. Boom times started again in the late 1940s. Soon Uxbridge Town had a Coca Cola Plant, Fritz Glitz, and Comco out on Reach Road.

By the early 1960s, trucks and cars were taking over some of the work from railways, and both mail and passenger service came to an end. The freight business eventually tapered off and died in the 1980s. Glen Acres in the northwest part of town was the first big subdivision, and others have followed as Uxbridge began spreading up out of the valley. In the rural routes, the hamlets as well have been experiencing growth.

Municipal borders changed in 1973 when Durham Region was formed. Scott Township, Uxbridge Township and Uxbridge Town were spliced together to form the current Township of Uxbridge. Uxbridge and Scott have been married now for over 30 years.

If Thomas Hilbourn, the patriarch of the Uxbridge Quakers, and his neighbours were to attend our bicentennial celebrations, they would be absolutely amazed at the changes that have happened in Uxbridge since they arrived here by horse and wagon two hundred years ago.

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