

Pickering



Local History File

Dwellings

**For
Reference**

When William Wright's bride arrived from England to join him on his farm near Pickering (originally called Duffin's Creek), she was so dismayed with the house he had built for her that she refused to unpack her trunks. Or so the story goes. Wright purchased the property (lot 10, concession 1, Pickering) in 1826 and, although no one knows for sure, it appears that his wife did finally decide to stay with him. Fifty years later the farm was owned by a J. Wright who – barring coincidence – was probably their son.

While little is known of the Wright family, we can be certain that the handsome two-storey house standing on a rise overlooking the Kingston Road is quite unlike the house William built for his young wife. The original dwelling was a simple stone house of one storey, designed as a Regency cottage with French doors leading onto a surrounding verandah. Not until the turn of the century was the second storey added. The work was so well done that only an expert eye can tell the old from the 'new.' Simple, yet imposing, it became a house that even Mrs Wright should have been proud to own.

Not far north of the Wright farm (on lot 10, concession 2, Pickering) is a small stone house that has remained in the same family since it was built in 1845. Its original owners, Robert and Rachel Betts, were among the many Quakers in Pickering and in this house they raised their family of seven children. Three of the Betts daughters became school teachers, and one of them, Adelia, educated all four of *her* children to follow the same profession. The Betts had one son, John, who died as a young man; when that hap-

pened, Adelia's husband, Stephen Cronk, sold his own farm in Prince Edward County and bought the Betts farm in order to help his father-in-law. In later years, Stephen and Adelia's son, Robert, joined in the work. Today the great-great-granddaughter of Robert and Rachel owns and lives in the house built so well by her ancestors.

Incredible difficulties were encountered by another Quaker family, who arrived in Upper Canada from Connecticut in 1800. Timothy Rogers, with his wife and fourteen children, first settled near Newmarket when that area was still wilderness. After seven years he moved most of his family to Pickering, and there founded another Quaker settlement. The simple brick building near the corner of Highway 2 and Mill Street was a meeting house for the Friends, built in 1867 on land given for the purpose by the Rogers family. It is now used as a Masonic Temple.

Only devout faith sustained the Rogers family during the trials and tragedies they encountered in their new country. In his journal,

William Wright house, lot 10, concession 1, Pickering



Timothy Rogers told a story of initial hope in the new mill at Pickering:

In 1807 I bot a mil plase in Picorin ... This town Picorn lays on about the sentor of Lake Ontarao wheir emtys a fine streme cold Dofins Crik. This is a fine streme and I bilt my mil, so a bote cold com 3 mils from the Lake Shore and land at my mil dor, a fine fishery it is.

Two or three years later, he attended a yearly meeting of the Friends near West Lake, Prince Edward County. On his return, he found that seven of his children – most of them married, with families of their own – were dead, victims of typhus. Two years later, while they were on a trip to York, Timothy's wife Sarah took ill. Rogers recalled:

While I was lay down a short time, but I heird Salla say Mrs Rogers is
Home of Robert and Rachel Betts, lot 10, concession 2, Pickering



dying I arose and made hast but befor I got to hur she was departed this life. And I sent to my setold childorn at the fardor end of Yong Stret. They came to hur burel that was on the 17 day of the firs month at my one house in Picorn with my three childorn, Sarah, John and John Elmsley Rogers. And now I was left to move in my new hous with four childorn, two oldest sons setold at Yong Stret and Timothy disoned and gon to the stats. Do you think tong can tell my trobel or pen right my greaf.

Timothy Rogers later remarried and his new wife, Anna Harned, bore five more children. One of these was Jonathan Rogers. For many years he owned the land to the west of the Quaker Meeting House and it may have been he who built the modest frame house at 95 Kingston Road (Highway 2). Jonathan's half-brother, Wing Rogers, recalled that 'In 1828 we mooved up to the Kingston and Toronto Road, & there I took a school, & there we lived for about four years on a little place, near to where the yearly meeting is now

The old Quaker Meeting House



granted to the society of friends.' It is likely that the house was built by one of the half-brothers, for it appears to pre-date 1845, the year in which the property was sold by Jonathan to Daniel McDermid. Ten years later another Quaker, Gervas Cornell, bought the house and built additions.

Although the Quakers were the first and, for many years, the largest religious denomination in the area, the other churches were not without adherents. The earliest church services were organized by the pioneers themselves, but within a few years ministers arrived on the scene. Among them was Rev. Adam Elliot, a devout and intrepid Anglican from Cumberland County in England, who had been ordained in 1832 and shortly afterwards founded the parish of St George's, Pickering. For the following five years he travelled throughout what was called the Home District, from York to Port Hope and north as far as Penetanguishene - no easy feat when the weather was frigid and the trails nearly non-existent. During that

Rogers house, 95 Kingston Road



period Elliot began work with the Indians, first on Manitoulin Island and three years later with the Six Nations. (A niece was Pauline Johnson, the poetess.) Elliot died in 1878, aged seventy-six. He is buried in the cemetery of Holy Trinity Church at Onondaga, near Brantford. The parish he founded in Pickering at the beginning of his career is still active. Its fine brick church, built in 1841, stands at the southwest corner of Highway 2 and Randall Drive.

George Washington Post settled in Pickering Township early in the last century. Some sources suggest that he was of Loyalist stock, but this seems unlikely considering his given names – they would have been a curious choice for Loyalist parents during the American Revolution. His father and mother, Jordan and Abigail Post, were from Hebron, Connecticut, and they, with their six children, came to the town of York at an early date, possibly in the 1790s. George moved to Pickering where, in 1815, he built an imposing brick house on the Kingston Road. For many years it served as

Post Manor, Highway 2 and Brock Road



an inn and later became a stopping place for Weller's coaches on their way between Kingston and York.

The Posts had five sons and two daughters. Their youngest son, a handsome young man named Jordan, worked at the inn with his family. A few years after his father's death in 1837, Jordan and his bride Matilda built a fieldstone house about four miles west of the inn. 'My parents were ambitious to engage in a different life from selling spirituous liquors,' their son Charles later recalled, 'so gave up the job, "went west" and started the saw mill, with farming on the side.' Jordan's new business must have prospered from the start, for his house, Post Manor, was both spacious and elegant. Outside, heavy cornices and gables complement the fieldstone. The interior detailing is exceptionally fine. From the centre hall, a graceful staircase with a black walnut banister curves up to the second floor. Post Manor has lost none of its original beauty, thanks to an appreciative succession of owners.

This fine house stands, almost hidden by tall fir trees, at the northwest corner of Highway 2 and Brock Road. When it was built, Jordan's wife Matilda was only twenty-one years old and Jordan himself was twenty-seven. He died twenty years later, leaving a family of eight children, the youngest just a year old. Matilda lived on in the house until her death in 1886. In the small cemetery across the road, the graves of Jordan and Matilda Post are marked by a marble obelisk.