

PATHMASTER

FOCUS ON ALTONA

WHAT'S INSIDE

▶ The little hamlet of Altona, named for a city in Germany, lies in the far northwest corner of the City of Pickering. The area was first settled by Mennonites from Pennsylvania. Many of the area's current residents are descendants of those original Mennonite pioneers.

The hamlet itself got its start in the year 1850 with the erection of three public buildings and the planning of another. Entrepreneurs Abraham Reesor, Joseph Monkhouse, and William Cooper built a mill, a store, and an inn, while the Mennonites set in motion plans for the building of a new meetinghouse.

To relate the history of the hamlet we include here items dating back as far as 1884 and as current as this year. The area has changed over the years, but with a little effort its rich heritage can be maintained.

▶ In her travels about southern Ontario, photographer Laura Sawodny has discovered some unusual mailboxes created by lovers of folk art.

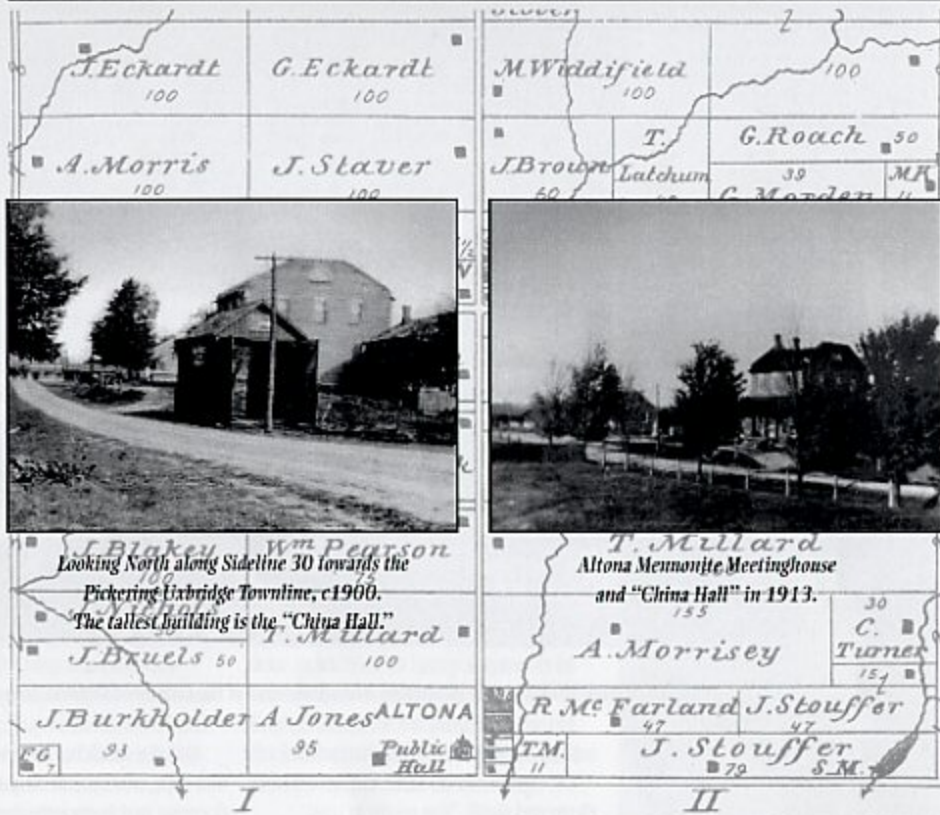
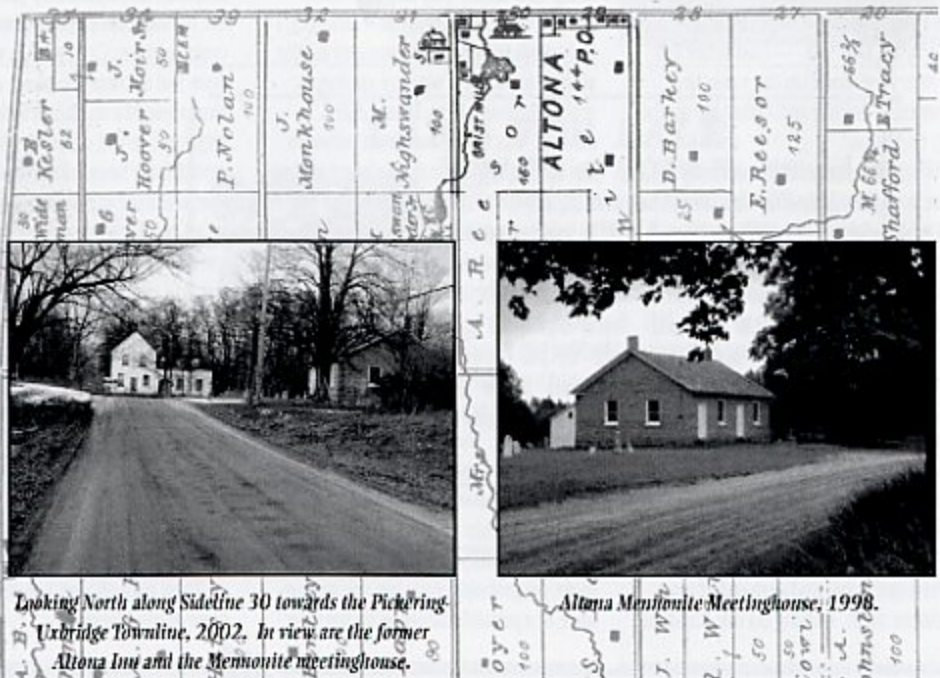


Photo courtesy of Joseph Nighswander.

The maps are from the Illustrated Historical Atlas of Ontario County, 1877.



Looking North along Sideline 30 towards the Pickering Uxbridge Townline, c1900. The tallest building is the "China Hall."



T. Millard Altona Mennonite Meetinghouse and "China Hall" in 1913.



Looking North along Sideline 30 towards the Pickering Uxbridge Townline, 2002. In view are the former Altona Inn and the Mennonite meetinghouse.



Altona Mennonite Meetinghouse, 1998.

Photo by John W. Schwan

Photo from Twentieth Century History of Altona.

Photo by John W. Schwan

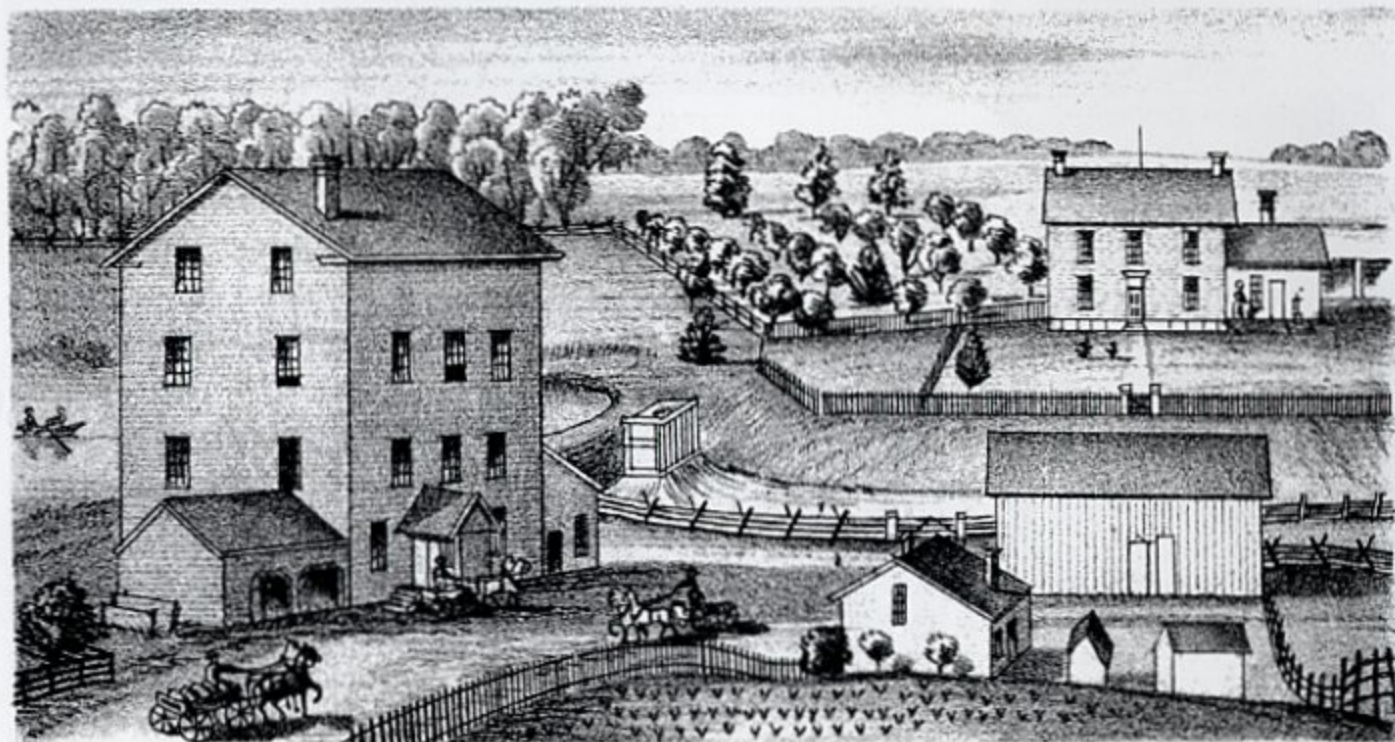
All About Altona

by Traveller [Ross Johnston]

Ross Johnston was a travelling salesman for the *Whitby Chronicle*.

In the years 1883-1884 he wrote a series of articles about his adventures in the villages and hamlets of Pickering Township under the heading "Our Town and County."

He signed himself simply as "Traveller." This item on Altona first appeared on 12 December 1884.



Reesor Mills from the Illustrated Historical Atlas of the County of Ontario (Toronto: Beers, 1877).

All about Altona—"Traveller" taken for a medicine man by a vinegary virago—Men, Mennonites and mills—"Traveller" burns the mid-night oil.

Whitby, Dec 9th. — Last letter left me hurrying along on the town line between Pickering and Uxbridge on the way to Altona.

When at a considerable distance therefrom (I will not say how far as I do not wish to locate the exact position) I met with the first rebuff experienced in my travels. It was getting towards evening, and a drifting snow storm had set in which proved anything but agreeable, especially with the wind in my face. Thinking it wise to take shelter a while, I called at a house by the wayside, when after repeated knocking the door was opened about three or four inches and a female face of doubtful age, not the most inviting ever beheld, peered out at me and demanded my business there. Putting on my blandest

smile I replied 'May I come in awhile.' 'Can't come in here' came the answer sharp and shrill. 'You might at least show common courtesy to a stranger, I only wish to stay a few minutes till the storm blows over,' was my apologetic reply. 'No room here, house full already,' was hissed out from between the thin lips and the door closed with a bang, leaving Traveller to face the storm as best he could. Learned afterwards that the 'house full already' was all a sham as I expected at the time. Too much *vinegar* in the atmosphere to allow of a houseful. Don't think a baby could live there without having fits. Hold on, this is too severe. I take half of it back again. The fact is, I had on an old rubber overcoat, buttoned up to the chin, one hand supported an umbrella, and in the other was my constant travelling companion, my satchel which make up probably gave me the appearance of a *perambulating medicine man*.

Alas the medicine man of this particular type, however worthy of honour, does not in this country and age receive the homage paid him in less civilized communities. Civilization you see does not necessarily mean *civility*. The treatment of a medicine man in the wigwams of the untutored Indians would have been much less rude than that accorded me as above stated; but let us not forget that the circumstances are different. Might enlarge on this head but will pass on. Had a good laugh all to myself as I pursued my solitary way. Found no such difficulty at my next calling place, as I was not only kindly received but invited to remain to tea, which I gladly did.

Making a fresh start I pushed on westward and finally reached the Altona Hotel kept by Mr. Andrew Brown.

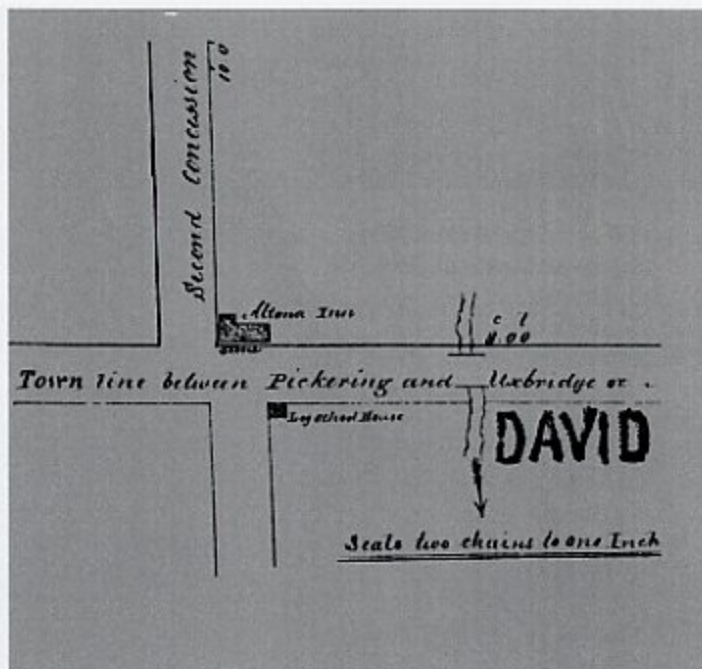
Tired enough was I, as the roads were getting heavy.

Andrew keeps a quiet comfortable house and does his best to make his guests feel at home. He professed to be a law-abiding citizen, and is therefore unlikely to give the License Inspector much trouble. He has been 20 years in business here and elsewhere, and is very fond of gardening. Mr. Thos. Monkhouse (brother of the much respected Reeve of Pickering) is the Post-Master and mercantile man of the place, and keeps a fine variety of goods embracing all lines needed in a country store. He is evidently doing an excellent business here. The business was established in 1850 by his brother Joseph, who carried it on for 15 years, since which time it has been conducted by Thomas. Can any mercantile house in the township show a longer record? Of church buildings there are two, both brick. The first, or oldest, is a small building owned by the Mennonites, of which body I understand Mr. Samuel

Hoover is the present minister. This church has been in existence here for many years. The other building is much larger, and was as I learned erected on union principles about 25 years ago, and is still so held, the Reformed Mennonites owning the largest share. A Union Sunday School is held here of which Mr. D. Barkey is the worthy superintendent.

The village school is also brick and was built in 1858, the old school house having been built in 1834 when the school section was first formed. Mr. Jas. E. Forfar is the present highly esteemed teacher. I am told that five out of six of his pupils who tried passed successfully the intermediate examination. Just come over with me and have a look through the 'Altona Mills' close by on the south side. Here we are, and here too is Mr. Abram Reesor the occupant, busy making repairs in the mill-race. Building frame, three and a half stories, water power, old process, machinery complete, mill been running about 20 years, capacity about 40 bbls. a day. Three run of stones, business chiefly gristing and chopping at present, but intention is to do more extensive business by and by. You have our best wishes Mr. Reesor for the success both of yourself and your mill.

Then close by is Mr. Flavius Reesor, also a miller, and thresher as well. His mill is a cider mill, and there is no lack of grists this season. He also runs a steam thresher, termed 'Sawyer's Grain Saver.' These Reesors work into each other's hands you see. The one threshes the grain and the other grinds it. Now, although through with the 'Altona Mills,' I am not through with the mills of Altona. There is quite a difference



Plan of Altona, surveyed by George McPhillips for David Reesor, 1857.

between a horse chestnut and a chestnut horse.

We will now take a run down further south and see the Altona woolen mills. A fine stream of water is the propelling power by which the machinery is kept in motion. But water-power and the best machinery would not accomplish much without brain-power, and that finds its embodiment in Mr. Thos. Waterhouse, the wide-awake Englishman who runs this establishment. The late partnership between him and Mr. Farlane, has been dissolved and Mr. Waterhouse has the business in his own hands. Went all through the mill, but having already described two other woolen mills I will save myself and

readers the infliction of a third attempt in that line. Mr. Waterhouse manufactures yarns, flannels, sheetings, horse-blankets (in which he challenges anything in the trade), blankets, tweeds &c. &c. The machinery is very complete, and the work turned out of excellent quality. Traveller would gladly have purchased tweed for a good suit had he seen his way clear for getting it home. There is a large amount of local trade done in addition to heavy shipments to Toronto and Montreal. There, I must shut off steam for the present as the old clock has struck the noon of night, and I must be up and off in the morning.

In 1890 the *Stouffville Free Press* ran this item about the Monkhouse store:



The place is noted because of Mr. Monkhouse's store. The store is noted not only because of its large stock of dry goods and groceries, but especially because it carries the largest stock of delf (sic) ware in this district. The whole of the upper flat of the large building (erected about twenty-five years ago) is transformed into a veritable China Hall. The visitor's attention is first arrested by counter after counter covered with handsome Dinner and Tea sets. This large assortment is found in a variety of colors in print and enamel, with plain gold or spangle. Under these counters are arranged scores of Toilet Sets from the comparatively plain to those of the most handsome design and superior quality. Next in order are arranged large counters of glass-ware, plain and in colors. On both side of the building run wide counters the full length, covered with a bewildering variety of fancy china. Much of this stock comes by direct importation from Europe. This fact is indicative of prices at "China Hall." No one in this vicinity need go to Toronto to buy fine table ware.



MARKET HOTEL,

COENR FRONT AND GEORGE STS.,

TORONTO.

TERMS ONE DOLLAR PER DAY.

THIS first-class MARKET HOTEL having been leased by MR. ANDREW BROWN, (late of Altona, Uxbridge,) is the best dollar-a-day house around the market. Soliciting a call from my old friends and the surrounding country, who I feel sure will find themselves at home.

17-y. ANDREW BROWN, Prop.

LAND FOR SALE.

PART of LOTS No. 28 and 29, 9th Concession of Pickering, containing 125 Acres, 50 of which are under cultivation. There are on the Land a good Frame Dwelling House and Barn, a young Orchard and an excellent Mill Site. The Land is of the first quality, and will be sold low for cash. For further information enquire at the Subscriber, on the premises.

DAVID KREIDER.
Pickering, June 27, 1837. 53-w12p

From The Constitution (York), 6 September 1837

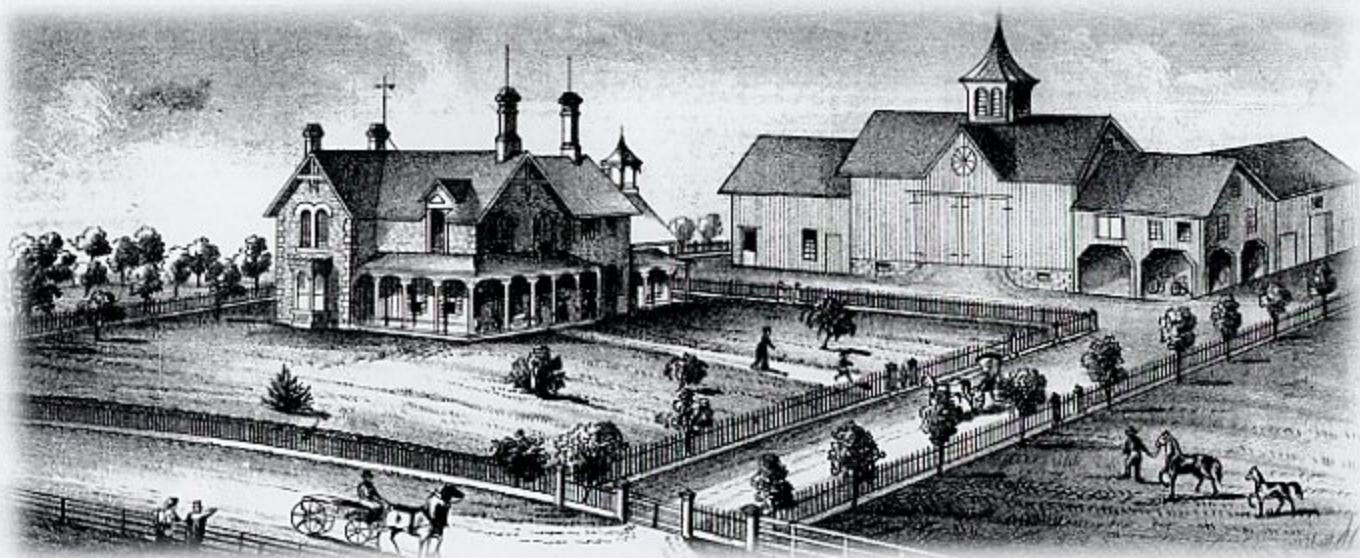
From Pickering News, 1 December 1882

Atha and Altona Pioneers

by Mrs. Thomas Dunkeld

This article by Mrs. Dunkeld was published under the heading "Local History of Atha and Altona Pioneers" in *Stouffville's The Tribune* on 27 February 1947.

Atha lies just to the south of Altona on the Eighth Concession Road. All that remains of the former hamlet is the schoolhouse.



Joseph Monkhouse's farm, Con. 9, Lot 32, as pictured in the *Illustrated Historical Atlas of the County of Ontario* (Toronto: Beers, 1877).

The year 1830 marks the beginning of a new era in the history of Upper Canada. It is estimated that 34 000 settlers entered the province in 1831 and during the next four years fully 160 000 were added to the population. Pickering Township had its growing time in this period. It was during this time that the communities of which we are interested namely Atha and Altona had their beginning.

ATHA

The first settler to come to the eighth concession of Pickering was Nathan Bently who came in 1831 and purchased the bush farm, which Mrs. Carruthers now owns. Mr. and Mrs. Bently lived there till his death in 1874. One of his daughters Mrs. C. McAvoy remained on the farm until the death of her husband. They had one son Otto.

On this farm was the first school house built in the southwest corner in 1811. It was a cottage type and was a fine school in its day. My father went

to that school. The desks were all around the wall the children facing the wall. The playground was the King's highway and as much woods as they wished to play in.

The present school house was built in 1864, opened on Jan. 1st 1865.

The Lehman family were one of the next to come. Daniel Lehman came in 1839 from Pennsylvania, bought the south half of lot 35, con 8. In 1835 he and his bride settled on the farm. Before he brought his bride he cleared a few acres of land and built a log house. In the three years he rode the same horse nine times to Pennsylvania and back. When he brought his bride they came on horseback. He erected a sawmill,

which continued in busy and successful operation as long as he lived. After his death in 1867 one of his sons

Abraham (my father) continued to operate the sawmill. He also had a shingle and lath machine. We elder children many a day packed shingles all day. The mill was later transformed into a chopping mill run with a stone grinder. The mill at this time is torn down. The property still remains in the Lehman name, Eli being the present owner.

Joseph Monkhouse

John Bell a native of Dumfriesshire, Scotland came to Canada with his wife in 1834 and settled on lot 28, con 7. One of his sons John M. Bell married and remained on the homestead making stock raising a

prominent feature of his farming activities. His daughter Mrs. Peter Stewart and her two sons John and Peter lived there until the death of their mother. Then John married Mary Duncan and farmed for some time. After John's death the property was sold to Fred Byer.

Michael Nighswander and his bride came in 1838 and located on lot 34, con 7. In 1845 he also erected a sawmill on the farm in which he did a good business for 45 years. Their family numbered ten, two sons, Michael and Tillman, lived on the homestead until their death. The property was sold to Mr. Kirton. Tillman had one son Otto. Mrs. Nighswander is still living and Mrs. Ralph Nighswander lives on the townline.

The Whitson family also came from Scotland in 1839 settling on lot 28, con 8 and since the death of their parents the two daughters Misses Ella and Georgie still reside on the farm with Mr. Fred Draper as manager. Robert Whitson owned the next farm east of his brother's with his two sis-



The "China Hall," probably in the 1930s.

ters Janny and Margaret. They had the post office till the rural route came from Claremont.

Abraham Hoover with his wife came from Markham purchased lot 39, con 8, in Oct. 1843. A house having been built and ten acres cleared. As time went by he owned 400 acres of land. His sons Sam, Noah, Elsie and Jacob took possession of the farms. The farms are now owned by Mr. Tran, Mrs. Louis Hoover, Mrs. MacDonald, and Mr. and Mrs. Eli Lehman.

Adam Spears, a native of Scotland, settled on lot 29, con 7, in 1840 and also built a sawmill. The lumber was teamed to Frenchman's Bay. The mill was continued in operation by his son James until about fifty years ago. The farm was sold and his son Adam lives in Whitevale.

Other pioneer names familiar are Lapp, Burks, Lott, Harrison, Hisey, but they are all gone and others have taken their places.

Mr. Joe Brown came to the eighth in 1830 and in 1889 the Dunkelds bought the farm. The father died soon after. The mother Lizzie and the three boys James, William and Thomas took over till their death, then Murray Dunkeld bought the farm.

I can't recall when the Byers came from Markham but I remember Mr. Joe Byers' grandmother so well. She was a kind lady. I worked there when she died and recall Joe Byers' sister

passed away the same day.

The only church near Atha was erected by the Baptist denomination and was opened on Sunday August 1835. The services were held there for 35 years. Only the cemetery remains on the Frank Gostick farm. The minister was Rev. I.D. Gostick. He came to Canada in 1832 from England and was always in his place on the sabbath. After it closed the Sunday School for awhile was held in the Atha school house. There was once a store and blacksmith at Atha corners managed by Mr. and Mrs. Beattie.

ALTONA

At Altona the Mennonites were the first to erect a church built in 1850. The church still stands and services are held there by the Mennonites. The ministers are Mr. Thomas Reesor, Mr. Fred Nighswander, Mr. A. Smith.

The union church, Mennonite and Christian, situated on the Abram Reesor property was built in 1872, Daniel Barkey being the promoter. He farmed east of Altona, his grandson Charlie Barkey now lives on the farm. The same denomination still hold their Sunday School and church services there. The present ministers are Mr. Hallman and Mr. G. Brown.

A name familiar to the Altona people was Joseph Monkhouse who came from Cumberland, England in 1849 and married Christena Reesor. He

built the Altona store and people came from miles around to make purchases. After his death his son Willis took over the store. He now lives in Stouffville. Fletcher Goudie now occupies the store building.

The homes of Mr. White and Mr. McChancy belonged to the Millard family, the land having been purchased from the crown at the time. The Morris farm belonged to the same family. A number will remember the old blacksmith shop where Mr. Boothby worked from morn till night shoeing horses and doing repair work. On the corner was a hotel kept by Mr. Brown where Mr. O. Madill now has a general store.

One of the earliest settlers to come to Altona district was the Daniel Yake family who came from Germany in 1804. It took fourteen weeks to cross. He buried his wife and four children at sea. He came to Canada from Pennsylvania with the rest of his family with their little effects and three cattle. Of the children only Michael remained in Pickering. In 1816 he married Jane VanZant. They had twelve children. One of his daughters Poly married Mr. Jones and she spent all her long life on the farm where Ralph and Mary reside.

Robert Scott, John Scott's father, came from Cumberland, England in 1868. In 1874 he married Alice Jones, a daughter of Mrs. Jones, and mother of Mrs. Bunker.

There are many more who lived in Altona, the Whites, Stouffers, Reesors, Hoovers. The Nighswander history was in the Tribune a few weeks ago.

The land at that time was nearly all bushland. They cut trees, the best of maple, piled the logs and burnt them, thousands of feet of the best timber, to clear the land. A tree at that time was of no value. In the spring they could tap any number of Maple trees, made their own wooden sap spiles and troughs for the sap, boiled it in iron kettles down to sugar. They made a year's supply of sugar and used it for all kinds of sweetening purposes. A day's work from sunrise to sunset for 50c a day or take as pay wheat and apples. They also had sheep and used the wool for socks, mitts, and took it to Cliff's mill at Altona to be made into cloth and yarn. The cloth was made into men's shirts and boys' suits and overcoats, underwear and dresses.

ALTONA MENNONITE MEETING- HOUSE



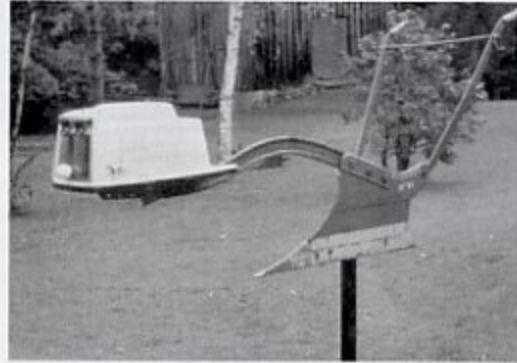
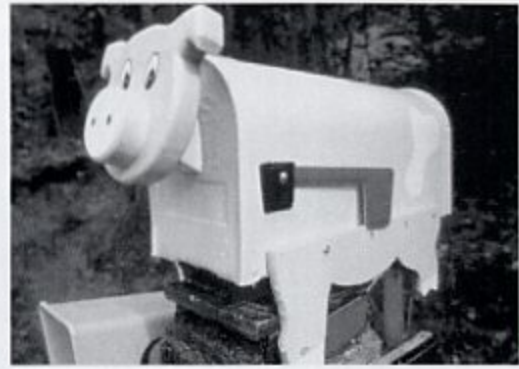
Altona Mennonite Meetinghouse,
c 1974.

Commentary by Ralph Greenhill,
Ken Macpherson, and Douglas
Richardson in Ontario Towns.
(Oberon Press, 1974, plate 37).

In 1853 the Society of Mennonites built this lovely little church in the hamlet of Altona. It is built in the delicately-coloured local brick of a shade between oatmeal and salmon-pink. This characteristic Mennonite church is not unlike a Quaker meetinghouse. But while the Mennonites segregated the congregation four ways — men, women, boys and girls — they did not insist upon separate entrances for men and women, as did the Quakers. Here, the door in the centre provides direct access to the church proper, and the other door leads to a vestibule across the end of the building. The interior of this church is particularly well-preserved and the churchyard contains many interesting stones.

Post Box Ontario

Photographs by Laura Sawodny



A Brief History of Altona

by Joseph Nighswander

Local Mennonite historian Joseph Nighswander has written before for *Pathmaster on the Altona Mennonite Meetinghouse* (1, 2 (1998), p. 19), on the *Nighswander Cider Mill* (1, 4 (1998), pp. 29-30), and on *School Section # 17* (3, 1 (1999), p. 3). This overall history of the hamlet of Altona was originally given as an address at an annual dinner of the *Pennsylvania-German Folklore Society of Ontario*. It was then published as part of a collection of *More Pioneer Hamlets of York, Canadian-German Folklore* (Vol. 9, pp. 21-28) in 1985. Reprinted with permission. A few minor changes have been made at Mr. Nighswander's suggestion.



Photos of Reesor Mills, probably early 20th century.

Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen.

It is an honour and a privilege for my wife and I to be here this evening and share with you a little bit of the history of the hamlet of Altona.

In case not everyone here is aware where to find Altona, it is located two miles east and a little south of Stouffville, on the Pickering Uxbridge townline.

Altona has been at the geographical centre of all of my life so far. I was born and lived for the first 25 years of my life in the home of my parents at Lot 31, Concession 9, Pickering. The house, built in 1851 by William Feaster, is situated at the southern limits of Altona.

This farm was purchased in 1838 by my great great grandfather, Martin Nighswander. His father, Abraham, came into Ontario around 1807, and lived with his second wife Susannah Hoover on the farm now occupied by the Markham Fair grounds. It is thought they lie buried on that property.

In 1948, when my wife and I were married, we lived on what was called the Johnson farm at Lot 31, Concession 9, within a mile of Altona. In 1970, when I began a second career, we moved to Lot 34, Concession 9, still within one mile of Altona.

In the cemetery at the old Mennonite Church are buried my great great grandfather Martin, my great grandfather Martin Jr., my grandfather Enos, and my father David. All of them and their wives lived out their lives within a mile of Altona!

So you see, Altona and the Nighswanders are quite synonymous since 1838.

When did Altona get its name, and why were most of the early settlers Mennonites from Pennsylvania?

Since I am speaking to a group of people who are quite aware of the great migration of the early 1800s into this part of Ontario, which included many Pennsylvania Dutch settlers, I will not go into detail of how they changed this part of the country from virgin forest into a productive agricultural area.

There is little doubt the name Altona came from the city of Altona in Germany. The Dutch Mennonite congregation in that city enjoyed great freedom of worship under Danish rule from 1610 on for many years, and produced some prolific writers. I can well remember my grandfather, Abraham Lehman, who read from a book of sermons written by a resident of Altona, Germany. So, although I know of no records to document my assertion, it is

quite likely the early Mennonite settlers named the hamlet after its counterpart in Germany.

All of you are also quite aware, I am sure, of Christian Reesor and his son Peter who set out from Pennsylvania in 1801, and purchased land at Lot 15, Concession 10 in Markham Township.

What you may not be as aware of is that Peter in 1812 obtained a crown grant of land at Lot 12, Concession 9 in Pickering Township. Later a Crown grant in 1854 of Lot 27, Concession 9 Pickering, was settled by Peter Reesor's son Peter Jr. who married Susannah Nighswander in 1848. Lot 27 is one half mile east of the main intersection in Altona, and Peter's descendants lived there until 1970.

Also Peter Reesor Sr.'s brother Abraham came to Altona in 1850 with his wife and seven children and built a house and a grist and saw mill. This mill was located on sideline 31 just south of the main intersection, and continued to serve the area farmers until it burned down on March 10, 1944. I can well remember spending many happy hours as a boy playing checkers in the mill office with a boyhood friend, Keith Howsam, whose father was the last owner operator of the mill.

It is interesting to note that Abraham

Reesor, died of typhoid fever only five years after he built the mill. His wife, Christina, left with seven children, remarried to Joseph Monkhouse, of another pioneer Altona family, of whom I shall speak a little later. Christina had only a life lease on the mill, so its ownership reverted to Abraham Reesor Jr. on her death, even though it was operated by Mr. Monkhouse while Christina lived.

Church and school seem to have been central in the lives of the Pennsylvania pioneers who founded and populated Altona in the early years. Let me tell you, then, about the school and church buildings of the Altona community, and something of the people who built and used these structures.

THE SCHOOLS

The first school of Altona was a log building built in, it is thought, 1825 on the south east corner of the main intersection, just north of where the old Mennonite Church stands since 1852. It was almost certainly of log construction with chinked walls and unplanned plank floors. It was likely devoid of gloves, maps, books or any other teaching aid other than the 'hickory stick,' and slates. Most teaching was by recitation. One historian says the teaching

profession was not seen as a respectable job, and most men teachers were persons who were incapable, for one reason or another, of hard physical work. Some were dreamers, some even alcoholics.

A new school was built in 1854 on the west side of sideline 31, on the other side of the road and a little south of the first school building. The present schoolhouse, now used as a community centre, was built on the same site in 1911-12. It is still in excellent condition.

It may be of interest to note the dividing line between the Altona and Glasgow school sections was the townline road, only a few hundred feet north of the Altona school.

This situation caused some problems through the years, with children from the north side of the township line having to either attend the Glasgow school 1 1/4 miles up the road, or pay non-resident fees to the Altona school section. I recall quite vividly the controversy caused in 1959 when the Altona school became overcrowded and all children in the Glasgow section were required to go to their own school. I was one of the school trustees at that time.

THE CHURCHES

Until 1825 the Mennonites of the district gathered, it seems, in the homes of the members for their worship services.

When the congregation grew too large they began using the old log schoolhouse on the S.E. corner. The first recorded minister was a man by the name of Daniel Kreider.

According to an old minute book which I have in my possession, a meeting of the members of the 'Society of Mennonists' was held on February 9 of 1850 for the purpose of selecting trustees for a piece of ground on which to locate a burying ground and build a meeting house.

Jacob Burkholder chaired this meeting, and the trustees appointed were Abraham Stouffer (founder of Stouffville), Samuel Hoover, and Martin Nighswander. Later meetings, of which there is a record in the old minute book, were held in the schoolhouse on February 6, 1851 and January 24, 1852.

On January 19, 1853 the trustee meeting was held in the new meeting-house, which indicates the church was built in 1852. It is said by an area historian the masonry work was done by a William Feaster, who while building the church caught a cold, which later caused his death. Mr. Feaster was the father of

Rachel, wife of Harmon Yake, another Altona pioneer.

Continuous services, although not every Sunday, were held in this church until 1974.

The building is still in good repair, although unused except for commemorative services held on October 5, 1980 and October 3, 1982. As one of the trustees for this building and the adjoining cemetery, I am interested in any counsel from persons such as those of you who are here tonight as to the future of this building.

The oldest grave in the cemetery is that of Elizabeth, wife of Abraham Stouffer. It is dated 1835.

In 1875 Abraham Reesor (Jr.) gave land to the people of the Mennonite Brethren in Christ Church, and of the Christian Church, so they could build a place of worship. Noah Detwiler was the first pastor.

This church is located a thousand feet or so east of the main intersection on the south side of the townline. The last service held in this church was in June 1980. It is now used for a prospering Christian Day School.

For many years the two groups used the building on alternate Sundays, with almost all members of both congregations attending the Union Sunday school and each other's worship services.

In the early and middle 1950's up to 185 persons were enrolled in the Sunday school programme, and it was the largest Sunday school in Pickering Township, with attendance of over 200 people on some occasions.

In 1957, the two groups united and affiliated with the United Missionary Church. Later in 1969, due to an amalgamation of the denominations in the U.S., the name changed to the Missionary Church.

There is no cemetery on the site occupied by this church building.

OTHER BUILDINGS

Another building of interest, which is still a part of Altona, is the old Altona Inn. The east frame section was built in the early 1850s, with a later two storey brick addition added in 1875. It was an impressive and popular entertainment place in the latter part of the 19th Century. A gilded sign hung over the gilded barroom in the new section. Above the barroom was a dining room/ ballroom. A second dining room was in the other half. In addition, there were guest rooms and a residence for the proprietor.



Nighswander Cider Mill, drawn by Paul H. Burkholder to accompany the Nighswander article in More Pioneer Hamlets of York.



Nighswander Cider Mill, painted by Elsie Nighswander (Joseph's wife).

With prohibition in 1910, the hotel business declined, and the building was used for other purposes. A general store was operated by O. M. Madill from 1921 to 1953.

It is now used as an apartment building and is still in good condition.

Any history of Altona should mention the Monkhouse store, which became quite famous in the general area.

In 1849 Joseph Monkhouse arrived in Toronto from Cumberland, England. In 1850 he came to Altona, and joined his brother Thomas, who had begun to keep a general store. The first store soon became inadequate, so Thomas built a large and impressive three storey building in about 1865 just south of the Mennonite Church. The Honourable George Brown delivered a political speech on the occasion of the opening of this store. A local historian notes the speech was incredibly dry.

The main floor of the building was a general store with the typical potbellied stoves and merchandise on shelves on the walls.

The main attraction, however, was

the 'China Hall' on the 2nd floor, which carried a large inventory of dry goods and deltiware. Handsome dinner and tea sets, toilet sets and a bewildering variety of fancy china, much of it imported from Europe, made this store an attraction to buyers from a wide area. The family lived on the third floor.

Joseph Monkhouse was a well-respected and admired man. He served for 10 years on the Pickering Township Council and as reeve from 1884-87, and was Warden in 1887. This was the Joseph who married Christina Reesor, whom I mentioned earlier as the widow of Abraham Reesor. He also purchased the farm at Lot 32, Concession 9, later known as the William Reesor farm, and farmed there for 12 years from 1874 to 1886. Joseph returned to the store in 1886 on the death of his brother Thomas. Joseph died in 1903.

His son Willis operated the store until 1937.

I can well remember as a boy looking with awe and wonder at the beautiful chinaware, which still occupied some of the shelves.



Memorial stone of Elizabeth Nighswander in the Altona Mennonite Cemetery. The inscription is in German.

Another well known building was the Nighswander mill, which began in the mid fifties as a woollen mill, then later became a grist mill, and still later, an apple butter mill. It was located on the south half of Lot 31, Concession 9, and was torn down only a few years ago. It was operated in the later years by



Memorial stone of Martin Nighswander in the Altona Mennonite Cemetery.

community. Many of the descendants of these families are still familiar names in the Pickering-Markham area.

One should mention James Jones Sr. and his wife, who in the earlier 1800s purchased Lot 1, Concession 1, Uxbridge, just west of the main intersection. His son Abijah Sr., was an active and

ly, members of which still live in the area.

Thomas Ambrose Lewis came to Lot 2, Concession 2, Uxbridge, in 1844. After a move to York County he returned to Lot 4, Concession 1, Uxbridge Township. He was twice married and had 10 children. One of his sons, Thomas H., farmed on Lot 1, Concession 2, Uxbridge. His sons, Stanley and Bertram operated a beef ring for many years. I can distinctly remember doing some of my first car driving going to the Lewises early in the morning for our share of fresh beef. Fred, son of Bertram, operated a store and farm machinery agency in Altona from 1946 to 1972. Robert and Harold, sons of Stanley, still live in the area and are well known and highly respected.

The Barkey family has also been prominent in Altona. Daniel Barkey, with his wife Barbara Pike moved to Lot 28, Concession 9, Pickering in the early 1850s. They replaced the log house on the property in 1857 with a very beautiful stone home, which is still in excellent condition.

Charles Barkey, grandson of Daniel, now lives in the Dublin Apartments in Markham.

And then there are the Yakes, the Hodgsons, the Millards, the Widemans, the Hoovers, the Stovers, the Byers, and the Groves and others whom I cannot mention for lack of time and space.

I have intentionally included in some detail several families who were not of Pennsylvania Dutch extraction. They are a part of the history of the community, and there was mutual respect for each other in spite of the variety of backgrounds of the people who lived in and around Altona.

All of the members of all of the families I have mentioned lived and loved, laughed and wept. They worked incredibly hard to develop the land, to raise their children, and to be responsible citizens.

In most cases they left us a heritage of stability, of integrity and of faith in God.

In conclusion, this brief history of Altona must mention the expropriation of land in 1972 by the Government of Canada for the new Toronto International Airport.

Even though the airport has not been built, the resulting demographic and sociological changes have almost completely altered the character of the Altona community.

But that is another story.

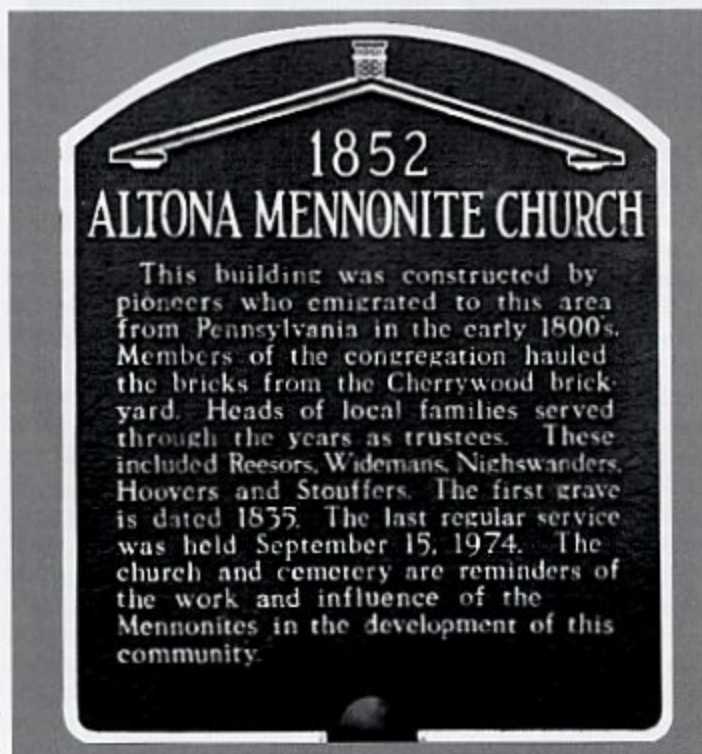
ALTONA MENNONITE MEETING- HOUSE



Altona Mennonite Meetinghouse, c1976.

Commentary by Marion MacRae and Anthony Adamson in Hallowed Walls: Church Architecture of Upper Canada. (Toronto: Clarke, Irwin, 1976, p. 194.)

In 1807 the first Mennonite settlers had made their way into Markham Township, taking up land near the Quaker settlement, and had begun, almost imperceptibly, to modify their attitude toward the customs and amenities enjoyed by their neighbours. Mennonite meetinghouses in the counties of York and Ontario tended to be in brick — a sensible selection on clay lands — and these plain people began gradually to adopt the use of oil lamps, window shades, and carriage sheds, in the manner of the Society of Friends living near them. In time the carriage sheds disappeared from the meeting-house yard at Altona in Pickering Township, as the Mennonite brethren slowly accepted the mobility of the automobile.



Historical plaque erected by Heritage Pickering.

my uncle Peter Nighswander and by my cousin Harvey.

FAMILIES IN ALTONA

I do not have time or space to mention all of the pioneer families of this

generous member of the community. I can well remember his sons Abijah, Jr. and Ralph, and daughter Mary who lived on the Jones homestead into the 1940s.

No history of Altona would be complete without mention of the Lewis fami-

THE ALTONA INN

by John W. Sabean

Few hamlets or villages can date their beginnings as precisely as can Altona. Until 1850 the only public or industrial building that existed at the juncture of Pickering Township's Sideline 30 and Uxbridge Township's Second Concession Road was a log schoolhouse.

In the year 1850 three entrepreneurs—Abraham Reesor, Joseph Monkhouse and William Cooper—created the nucleus of the hamlet of Altona with the building of a mill, a store, and a hotel.

Reesor's Mill

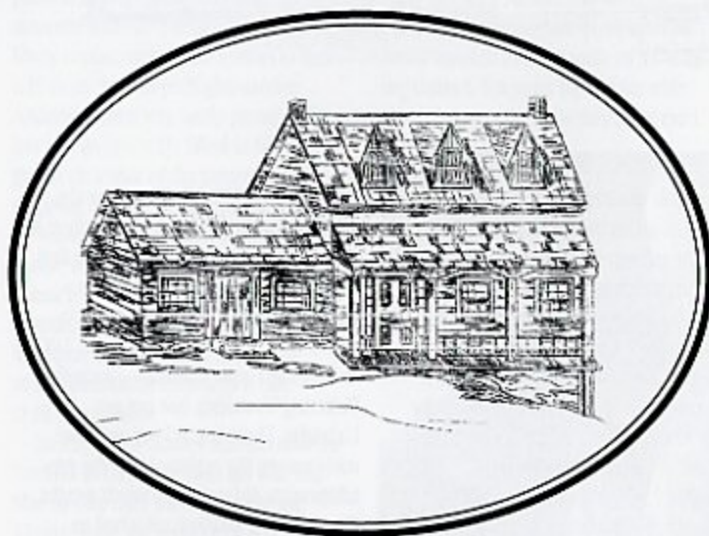
Abraham Reesor (1815-1855) was the son of immigrants Peter Reesor (1775-1854) and Esther Eby. In 1804 the Reesor family, headed by Christian Reesor, Peter's father, made the trek in a Conestoga wagon from Pennsylvania to Markham.¹ They were among the early settlers of Markham Township. The Reesors were part of an extensive Mennonite migration to Markham, part of which spilled over into western Pickering Township.

In 1850 Abraham Reesor, who farmed Lot 34, Concession 3 in Pickering Township (down by Cherrywood), built two mills, a flour mill and a saw mill, at the north end of Lot 30, Concession 9 in Pickering Township.² However, just five years after he started the mills he died of typhoid fever. Joseph Monkhouse married his widow and ran the mills for awhile until Christina died, then Abraham's and Christina's son, Abraham, Jr., took over the operations. After the Reesors the mill went through a series of hands until it burned to the ground in 1944.

Monkhouse's Store

Joseph Monkhouse (c1826-1903) originally came to Canada West in 1849 to operate a store in Stouffville, but he soon came to the north end of Pickering Township to join his brother Thomas. Here he established a business which was to be widely hailed during his lifetime, and which would last for almost a century. The business was a store, which Joseph created in 1850. It was here in 1853 that the Post Office was opened with Joseph as the first Postmaster.³ It would have been at that time that a name was chosen for the post office, and therefore of the little hamlet that was taking shape around it.

When Joseph Monkhouse left to run the Reesor Flour Mill, sometime after 1857, his brother Thomas stepped in to



The Altona Inn as it would have looked in 1850.

take over the daily operation of the store. He was the chief clerk and also the Postmaster until he died in 1886. After a few years the business was so successful that the old two-storey building was torn down and a new three-storey building was erected in its place in 1865.

Once Joseph Monkhouse's duties as miller ceased he turned to farming. He purchased Lot 32, Concession 9, and there carried on a successful farming operation. He also took up politics and served on the township council for 10 years. A measure of his stature may be taken from his election to several terms as Reeve of the township (1884-1887) as well as a stint as county Warden (1887).⁴ When Thomas died in 1886, Joseph left off farming and returned to the store. Monkhouse died in 1903 and the business was taken over by his son Willis who continued the business until 1937. This building, too, eventually succumbed to the flames.

Cooper's Inn

In the same year that Abraham Reesor was building the mills and Joseph Monkhouse was creating his store, both near the southeast corner of

Altona, William Cooper was erecting the Altona Inn on the northeast corner of the intersection. The hotel was a mainstay in Altona for 60 years before it fell victim to the Temperance Movement.

In Pickering the concessions were laid out from Lake Ontario, so concession roads run east-west, the north-south roads being referred to as sidelines. Uxbridge, on the other hand, was laid out from Yonge Street and so its concession roads run north and south. Where Sideline 30 in Pickering meets the Second Concession Road in Uxbridge at the Uxbridge-Pickering Townline lies the hamlet of Altona, equally divided between Pickering and Uxbridge. The former Altona Inn is situated on the northeast corner of this intersection, on the Uxbridge side of the road.

The village of Claremont in Pickering lies to the east and a little south—about seven kilometres, while Stouffville is about the same distance to the west and a little north. One 19th century writer referred to Altona as "the eastern suburb of Stouffville."⁵ Indeed, the citizens of Altona have always related more to Stouffville than

to either Uxbridge or Pickering.

There is no evidence that any structure had been built on the northeast corner of what became the hamlet of Altona before 1850. When William Cooper purchased the property in 1850 it was with a view to constructing an inn. This was to be one of eight that existed in Uxbridge at mid-century. As McBurney and Byers stated in *Tavern in the Town*:

Uxbridge was founded by Pennsylvania Germans and Quakers, and from earliest times, when John Plank built the first tavern there, business and drinking flourished. By mid-century there were eight taverns in Uxbridge Township and, in the free-and-easy spirit of the times, people as young as fifteen years were allowed to drink in them.⁶

Cooper's inn was in a strategic location—about mid-way along the east-west route between Claremont and Stouffville. It would serve as a stopping place for weary travellers and as a meeting place for local residents.

Inns were an important institution in pioneer society and were often among the first structures to be erected. For travellers on their way to their new homesteads, or on their way to market, or, of course, on many another journey, inns were places for lodging, dining, and drinking, and for the refreshing and/or stabling of horses. And because travel was slow and tedious inns were frequent along the roads and spaced at convenient intervals. For community purposes inns were often the only public buildings available for meetings or social gatherings. It was here that dances were held, politics was discussed, and all the local and distant news was exchanged.⁷

William Cooper was 60 years old when he established the Altona Inn. He maintained it, possibly with the help of his son James, for five years before retir-



The Altona Inn as it would have looked in 1875.

ing and selling the business to Andrew Lindsay. In the 1851 Census for Uxbridge, miller John Hicks is listed as owning a distillery. This may have been at least one source of Cooper's supply of liquor.⁸

The next owner of the Altona Inn was Andrew Lindsay. Lindsay was included in Lovell's Directory of 1857 as the innkeeper, but he may have died that year or the next because for the years 1858-59 the Assessment Rolls list George Levitt (b. 1829) as innkeeper. James Cooper (b. c1827) was the innkeeper in 1860-61, Andrew Brown in 1865, and George Fishburn from 1866 to 1870. And in 1867 it was Andrew's wife Hannah who sold out to Andrew Brown.⁹

The man who owned the inn for the longest period—for 39 years—and the man whose name is usually associated with the inn, is Andrew Brown (1823-1907). This was not Brown's first association with the running of an inn. He had been proprietor of the Halfway House (he called it The Forest Inn) on the Fourth Concession Road at the corner of Stouffville Road.¹⁰ And in 1865, as we have seen, he ran the Altona Inn for Hannah Lindsay.

Brown operated a very successful business in Altona, successful enough by 1875 to carry out a project of renovation. He replaced the west half of the old frame building, which housed the barroom, with a new two-storey brick addition. A new barroom—decorated in gilt—was installed on the first floor and above it was a dining room and ballroom. The east wing, which was left intact, was renovated to house an additional dining room, guestrooms and the residence for the proprietor and his

family. At the entrance a gilded sign stood as an invitation to patrons.

The selling of alcoholic beverages in taverns and inns was regulated right from the early years of the province's history. In order to sell "spirituous liquors" an innkeeper had to obtain a licence, and the number of licences for any township was determined by the Court of General Quarter Sessions of the Peace.¹¹ In addition, the sale of liquor was closely overseen by inspectors. In 1805 eighteen people in the Home District applied for licences to keep a tavern. Not all were recommended, but among the successful applicants was Hawkins Woodruff who was the first to operate a hotel/tavern in Pickering Township.¹² It was not until about 1825 that the first hotel was established in Uxbridge—by J.P. Plank, in what became Uxbridge Village.¹³ It is not known, however, if Plank's hotel was immediately licenced.

By all accounts excessive consumption of alcohol was a severe problem in the pioneer society of Upper Canada. Almost all travellers' and settlers' accounts make mention of the over-drinking and its effects on family life and the local community. The causes for this were many and complicated and cannot be easily summarized in this report, but certainly contributing factors included the loneliness and harshness of pioneer life and the lack of intellectual and cultural stimulants and social engagement.¹⁴ And for the traveller, whiskey, which was extremely cheap, was a welcome relief at the end of an exhausting journey.

The Temperance Movement—an attempt to deal with the ills created by the problem of over-consumption—

began in the United States where the problem was just as acute. From there it spread to Upper Canada where the first temperance society was formed in Bastard Township (Leeds County) in 1828. By 1832 there were about 100 societies in Upper Canada—including Pickering Township, but not yet Uxbridge. However, at least until the mid-century the arguments of the prohibitionists did not carry much weight. For one thing whiskey sales had an important economic function. As Leo Johnson put it:

In early periods when grain was cheap and difficult to transport, whiskey produced from wheat paid for many early farms. Moreover, in an era when travel was slow and difficult, frequent inns were necessary for the comfort and well-being of travellers, and the sale of alcohol was a mainstay of the innkeepers' incomes. Without the sale of whiskey there is little doubt that many, if not most, inns would have been forced to close. Indeed, not only was the latter argument used to defend the sale of whiskey, but in periods of strong temperance agitation the dependency of the public on the inns was exploited to prevent the effective introduction of anti-liquor legislation.¹⁵

In Ontario County the Temperance Movement began to take a foothold in the 1850s when several new societies were formed, including one in Uxbridge. In 1858 a demonstration by temperance advocates was held in Uxbridge in order to bring attention to the issues and to recruit new members. If the popularity of prohibition was increasing, however, it was not translat-

ing into votes. And when by-laws were passed they proved to be ineffectual, or worse still, counter-productive. Voters were well aware of what happened in Bowmanville in 1859 where a by-law was passed to prohibit the sale of whiskey by inns and taverns. The *Whitby Chronicle* recounted the results:

The effects of a prohibitory liquor law in Bowmanville are daily becoming more inconvenient, and a subject of public complaint. The Tavern-keepers—prevented from selling that on which alone they derived a profit—keep their premises altogether closed up, their gates locked, and will not open them to travellers or anyone else. This they do by way of retaliation for the unjust manner in which they consider they have been treated. The result is that neither food nor a place to rest—for man or horse—can be procured in the Town for love or money.¹⁶

Customers, of course, simply went to nearby towns to secure their wants and needs. Johnson adds:

When farmers and travellers, complaining of the lack of accommodation for themselves and their horses, began to avoid Bowmanville, the bylaw was hurriedly repealed. After a few such experiences, the movement faded from view until the 1870s.¹⁷

As interest in prohibition began to wax again in the 1870s there was another grand demonstration in Uxbridge in May 1873 led by the Sons of Temperance Society. Perhaps in response the Uxbridge Township Council in 1875 passed a by-law to limit the number of tavern licences to five. Among those fortunate five was Andrew Brown of Altona. The other innkeepers had to be content with licences for Temperance Houses.¹⁸

Meanwhile the provincial and federal governments began to get into the act. In 1864 the province passed the Dunkin Act which introduced the principle of Local Option. Any county or municipality—if they could secure a majority vote—could prohibit the retail sale of liquor. It wasn't until 1877, however, that a poll was taken in Ontario County. Uxbridge Township was one of four municipalities that voted against prohibition, but since an over-all majority in the county approved it was put into effect in the following year. The new law, however, proved to be unenforceable in the coun-

ty and just a year later — in 1879 — a by-law to repeal the Dunkin Act in Ontario County was passed.

In 1878 the federal government, under John A. Macdonald, passed the Scott Act which had much the same provisions as the Dunkin Act. It took another eight years for this to come into effect in Ontario County, only to be repealed again three years later — again because it was unenforceable. The repeal of the Scott Act in Ontario County brought into force again the Crooks Act, a law that was passed by the provincial government in 1876, putting the authority for licencing the sale of alcohol into provincial hands.¹⁹ So in 1890, when applications came in again for liquor licences, the provincial inspector again approved five licences in Uxbridge Township, and once again Andrew Brown was among their number.²⁰ The struggle between the Wets and Drys continued for the next 20 years, but while Brown always faced the threat of losing his right to sell liquor, his licence was renewed annually.

The federal government tried again — this time under Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier. In 1898 they held a national plebiscite, and while a majority voted in favour of prohibition it was not a large enough majority for Laurier to feel confident in passing it into law.

Then the province tried again. Under Premier James Whitney the rules were tightened: the cost of licences was increased and inspections were made both more frequently and more stringently. Whitney would still allow municipalities to introduce prohibition, but only if they achieved a three-fifths majority of voters. In 1905, 94 Ontario municipalities put the question to a vote. The townships around Uxbridge — Markham, Pickering, Whitchurch, and Scott — were among the 94, but Uxbridge was not. Uxbridge did, however, put the matter before the electorate in the following year, but although the Drys won the vote they failed to reach the necessary three-fifths majority. Prohibitionists had to wait another three years before they could make another attempt, and this time — in 1910 — they were successful. Local Option came into effect in Uxbridge Township in May 1910.²¹

Before the axe fell, Andrew Brown had retired in April 1906. By that time he was 83 years of age. He died a year later and was buried alongside his wife Martha (who had died in 1901) in the Altona Cemetery. His epitaph reads: "

In life beloved, in death lamented." And this sentiment seems to be genuine, for by all accounts he was a highly respected member of the Altona community, and ran an efficient, popular and no-nonsense establishment in his more than 40 years in the hospitality trade.

Several authors refer to an epithet that became associated with the Altona Inn during the Brown regime — "Look-See Brown" Hotel — and conclude from that that "many hair-raising events took place there."²² But no compilation of stories has survived to substantiate this interpretation. A more likely explanation of the epithet is that told to me by Joseph Nighswander. Andrew Brown was justly proud of his inn and its décor. He liked to take guests on a tour of the premises and stopping in front of a particular feature he wished to point out would say, "Look, see..."²³ This explanation is much more in keeping with the reputation that Brown had earned in Altona over the years. His burial in the Mennonite cemetery is not at all an anomaly.

In 1906 Ted Graves moved out from Toronto to Uxbridge with his wife Ida Mae to take over the running of the Altona Hotel. He apparently had dreams of turning the hotel into a summer resort, but that was not to be.²⁴ After a couple of years he turned over the operation of the business to James Wellman who ran it for the next three years with the help of his son Harry until Local Option made it unprofitable in 1910.²⁵

The next owner, Michael Peters of Toronto, who seems to have been an absentee landlord, turned the building into apartments. There is some evidence that one renter may also have used part of the premises as a store during the summer months.²⁶

The former hotel gained new purpose when Oliver M. "Ollie" Madill (1887-1968) returned to his roots in 1921 and remodelled the building into a general store. The Monkhouse store was still in operation and would be for another decade and a half, but there was little competition as they traded in different goods.

While Madill came to Altona from Toronto he was born in Brougham and had roots that went well back in Pickering history. His great grandmother, Ruth Wixon, was the daughter of Joshua Wixon, one of the earliest settlers in the north of Pickering; she is believed to have been the first white

child born in Pickering Township. Madill's tenure in the former Altona Inn was second only to that of Andrew Brown. He ran the Altona General Store for 32 years, from 1921 to 1953.

When Madill took over the premises he found them badly in need of repair. He completely renovated the interior to make it suitable for grocery sales. He added shelving, but found that the old bar would serve just as well for his counter. He put on a new roof, tore down the out-buildings, and cleared away the underbrush. But more he could not do immediately because he found himself in the middle of a slumping market. For years he and his wife struggled to make ends meet, but even-

Madill probably chose the right time to retire, for by the 1950s small country stores were beginning to give way to the super stores appearing in the town centres. So when Robert Hilker Brown came down from Bruce County to take over the store he found a business that was rapidly declining. He lasted a mere two years before packing it in.

Hilker Brown was the great uncle of Allan McGillivray, the present curator of the Uxbridge-Scott Museum and Archives. Allan was only about 11 or 12 years old when Brown ran the store. He remembers going to the store on occasion for ice cream, and he remembers his great uncle's booming voice and great mustache.²⁸



Oliver Madill's Altona General Store, 1940s.

ually they came to enjoy a more fruitful profit margin.

Once he was well established he undertook a beautification project for the property to the east of the building. He spruced up the whole area to create a park-like setting, and even built a bridge over the creek. The store itself occupied the brick part of the building while the older frame structure served as the family residence. Madill's services included an egg-grading station and the area's first gas pump. After he retired in 1953 he moved to Stouffville.²⁷

What was needed in the area was not a general store, but a facility that catered to the needs of local farmers. In 1954, Fred Lewis opened his Altona Feed and Supplies store just down the road from the Altona General Store. This business lasted twenty years until changes in local farming practices phased out even this business.²⁹

After Brown closed down the Altona General Store the building was once again converted to apartments and run as such by subsequent owners.

The hamlet of Altona was never large and its public buildings were few



Oliver Madill.



Photo by John W. Sabean.

The former Altona Inn, now lying empty and boarded up, March 2002.

but served the basic needs of a farming community. There were, of course, other services and other businesses locally available — such as a blacksmith and a slaughterhouse — which came and went as the need dictated.

The Altona Inn was one of the first extra-residential structures to be built in the hamlet of Altona. With both a commercial and social purpose it was also one of the keystone buildings. For 60 years it served its original function, and in a later age served another important role as the community's general store.

Of the eight primary nineteenth-century commercial or public structures of the hamlet of Altona — two churches, a school, two mill complexes, a hotel, a temperance hall, and a store — only half are still standing. Of these none are still in use as originally intended, and only one is fully occupied.

The public buildings that remain, along with a few of the older houses such as those built by Abijah Jones and Joseph Monkhouse, are all that is left to tell us the story of this once Mennonite-dominated area. Since this hamlet sits on the edge of the Oak Ridges Moraine — which is to be preserved — it would be well to preserve as well those buildings which have defined the area over many years. Perhaps if the Moraine becomes a place to visit — to view the countryside and to walk the trails — once thriving hamlets like Altona will discover a new purpose and a new life.

NOTES:

1 The story of the Reesor family migration has been told often. See, e.g., *Reesor Family in Canada* (2000), and Davies (1973).

2 Mills may have existed before 1850 at the north end of Lot 30, Concession 9. In the 1851 Pickering Census under the name of Abraham Reesor two mills are described: "1 Flouring Mill. Cost £300. Power to drive 2 run of stone. Produce about 200 bbls per annum." and "1 Saw Mill. Cost £50. Power to drive 1 saw. Produces about 100 m feet per annum." Attached to these entries is a note, probably for assessment purposes, that "These are both old mills, and are not at present worth scarcely of [sic] fraction of their original cost." If the mills predate Reesor just who built the mills and when is not now known. Reesor then would not have been the creator of the mills, but the restorer only.

3 Rosenthal (1965). In the census of 1851 both Johnson and Thomas are described as merchants. By that time the brothers had been joined in Pickering by their parents John and Sarah.

4 Farewell (1907), pp. 145-150. Wood (1911), 272-273.

5 *Free Press* (Stouffville), 1890.

6 McBurney and Byers (1987), p. 116. According to the Census of 1851 the innkeepers in Uxbridge were: William Cooper, Joseph Finch, Joseph Galloway, William Gamble, Leonard Long, George Metcalf, John P. Plank, and Henry Vanzant. Cooper, Galloway and Vanzant all possessed an inn (and Vanzant's residence is described as a roadhouse), the others all possessed a tavern. Gamble, Long and Vanzant were listed as farmers and Finch as a smith, rather than innkeepers.

7 The two standard accounts of Upper Canada's inns are Gullet (1954-1962) and McBurney and Byers (1987).

8 Census of 1851, p. 55, #1.

9 Lovell (1857); Assessment Rolls for Uxbridge, 1858-1866; Census of 1861; Conner and Colton (1869).

10 Todd (1980), p. 35, n. 14. According to the Assessment Rolls, Brown worked at the Altona Inn in 1865 for Mrs. Lindsay. In 1866 he is shown as the hotel keeper at Concession 3, east Lot 18. He is listed as the owner of the Altona Inn in 1867 and again in 1869, but is also shown as the owner of Concession 3, east Lot 18 (with David Armitage as the innkeeper).

11 McBurney and Byers (1987), pp. 4-5.

12 Fraser (1932), pp. 78-79.

13 Higgins (1887), p. 70.

14 Garland and Talman (1931), esp. p. 175; Gullet (1954-1962), esp. I, 54; McBurney and Byers (1987).

15 Johnson (1973), p. 217.

16 May 13, 1859, as quoted in Johnson (1973), pp. 218-219.

17 Johnson (1973), p. 219.

18 Todd (1980), p. 100. The other licences were: Barnard Rowland and Jim Todd at Goodwood, John Saunders at the Halfway House, and George Conway at Rothes.

19 Authority to issue licences resided first with the governor of the colony (to 1818), then with the provincial magistrate (1818-1849), then with the municipal governments (1849-1876), and finally with the provincial government (from 1876). McBurney and Byers (1987), p. 5.

20 Todd (1980), p. 184. The others were: John Higgins and Jim Todd at Goodwood, Lance Hutchinson at Rothes, and Ambrose Lewis at Glen Major.

21 A good summary of the temperance movement in Uxbridge Township may be found in Todd (1980), and in Ontario County in Johnson (1973).

22 Gauslin (1974), p. 207.

23 Joe Nighswander, pers. comm. One historian got even the name garbled referring to "Luxey Brown" (Reesor, n.d.)

24 News clipping probably from the *Stouffville Tribune*, c1953, as found in the Altona Tweedsmuir History.

25 Assessment Rolls.

26 News clipping probably from the *Stouffville Tribune*, 1951, as found in the Tweedsmuir Histories. See also the Assessment Rolls for 1916 and 1917.

27 Much of the information about Madill comes from the Tweedsmuir Histories.

28 Allan McGillivray, pers. comm.

29 Sabean (2000).

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Making Our Own History

Originally Ron Getz, our December 2000 speaker, put together his stories about the Rebellion of 1837 for the Pickering Museum Village. We asked him if he could reprise some of them for us. He told us generally the story of the march to Montgomery's Tavern and of the role played by Brougham resident Peter Matthews. But the greater part of his talk had to do with Randall Wixon, a one-legged Baptist lay preacher who raised supporters for Mackenzie in Brock Township. Wixon was an early follower of Mackenzie and ran the *Colonial Advocate* while Mackenzie was in England in 1832. Wixon was imprisoned after the Rebellion and shipped to England to await trial and transportation to Van Dieman's Land (Tasmania). However, he was released on a writ of habeas corpus and sent in exile to the United States.

We had put out an inquiry about the notorious Markham Gang that terrorized people in this area in the 1840s. Eventually we were directed to Paul Arculus of Port Perry, who, it turns out, is writing a book about the gang. Arculus came to speak to us in January 2001 and told us of his work in progress. The Markham Gang was big news in the mid-1840s when they were arrested and put on trial for their crimes, but historians did not keep the story alive and consequently few people now have heard of the crime wave that plagued the early settlers.

To celebrate Black History Month in February we invited Dr. Colin McFarquhar to address us on "The Black Experience in 19th Century Ontario." Upper Canada had a slave history, but never in large numbers, and slavery was abolished early in our history by the Act of 1793, and allowed to gradually die out. Later in the 19th century, Upper Canada became a "Safe Haven" for former American slaves who escaped along the Freedom Trail. However, while Blacks enjoyed a new-found freedom in Canada they still suffered from discrimination and prejudice. McFarquhar told us about several Black communities that developed in southwestern Ontario — the Dawn Institute near Dresden, the Refugee Home Society near Windsor, and the

Elgin Settlement in Kent County.

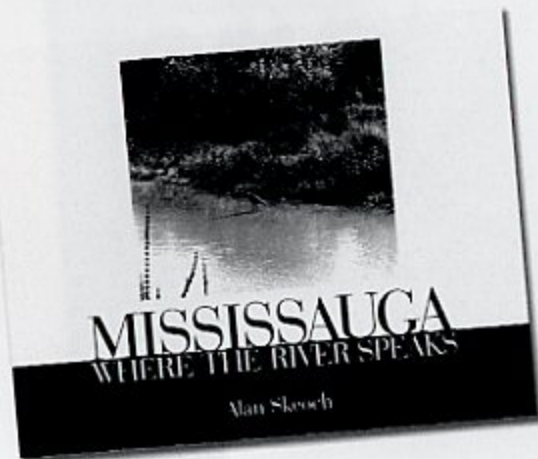
Our speaker for March was unable to come at the last minute, so we held an Open Session to review our four-year history as a society and discuss some issues pertaining to Pickering's heritage.

In April, storyteller Sher Lectooze told us some unusual tales that she has gleaned from her researches into the War of 1812. We heard about Mrs. Bates whose goods were stolen by troops from her Newark (Niagara-on-the-Lake) boarding house. She went directly to the commander to complain about her treatment and had her property returned. Of Laura Secord, whose story has been much embroidered over the years, we heard the true story of our Canadian heroine. These and other stories Lectooze told demonstrate how far from dry and boring Canadian history really is.

Our Annual General Meeting was held in May. Tom has completed four years as our (first) president. Vice-President John Sabean now moves up to take over the presidency. Tom was elected Vice-President and Carol Sabean Treasurer. PTHS member Henry Gawman had some interesting and amusing stories to tell about the War of 1812 — adding to those we heard last month from Sher Lectooze. After Henry's talk we watched a recently made video about St Anne's Anglican Church in Toronto. The interior of this church was decorated in a Byzantine style in the 1920s under the direction of Group of Seven artist J.E.H. MacDonald. It is a magnificent piece of work and part of our artistic heritage. Much of the decoration has recently undergone renovation.

Our June speaker was Dave Savage who is an authority on the railways and railway stations of Ontario. Savage has a large collection of photographs of railway stations, some of which he showed us as part of a slide lecture. He himself has travelled widely in Ontario (and other parts of Canada) to photograph and preserve the memory of these fast-disappearing specimens of our heritage. Savage has produced a book on railway stations, *Directory of Railway Stations of Ontario*, and plans to produce more.

Charles Taws, Curator of the Bowmanville Museum, helped to get



our fifth year off to a great start with his presentation on early Bowmanville at our September 2001 meeting. Bowmanville began as a mill town and in its early years was known as Darlington Mills. The earliest settlers in the area were the Burks who immigrated to Darlington Township in the 1790s with the Conants and the Trulls. Taws described how the town migrated from an earlier site to its present location. The name Bowmanville was derived from businessman Charles Bowman.

Social Science Teachers' Association (OHASSTA). In 1999 he won the Governor General's Award for Outstanding Teaching from Canada's National History Society. More recently he published a new history of his hometown: *Mississauga: Where the River Speaks*. He related some of the stories from that book.

Bessie Gannon has been very active in the Whitby-Oshawa Genealogical Society for quite a number of years. For example, as a dedicated researcher she is one of those intrepid souls who has

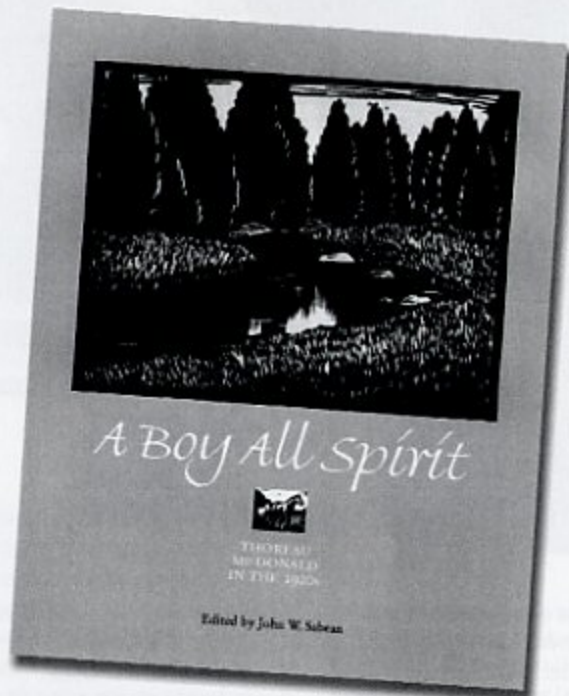
5 The Pioneer Years 1805-1850: A Collage of Impressions and People



Our guest speaker for our October meeting was Alan Skeoch, a name known to many of our members as a long-time commentator on Ontario's history for the CBC's Radio Noon. Alan was a very popular teacher of history at Parkdale Collegiate Institute for over 30 years, and served as a Director and President of the Ontario History and

spent much time in the reading of gravestones in the Region of Durham (including Pickering) for the Ontario Genealogical Societies' cemetery inventories. For our November meeting she conducted a genealogical seminar to help newcomers to get started on their family histories.

Making Our Own History



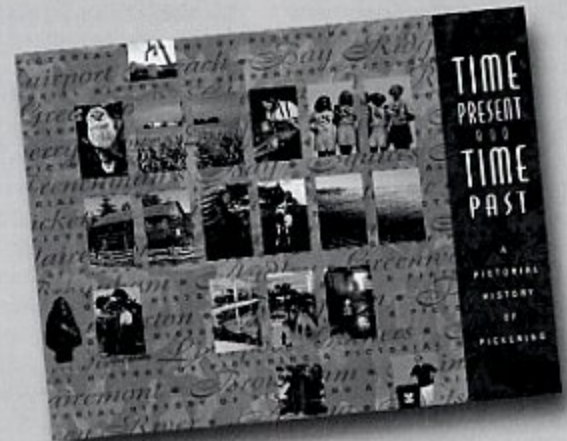
Our readers have their say ...

Recently we received this comment about *Time Present and Time Past* from Thomas F. McIlwraith, associate professor of geography at Erindale College, University of Toronto, and author of *Looking for Old Ontario: Two Centuries of Landscape Change* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997).

"I have now had time to peruse *Time Present and Time Past*, and found that I could not put it down. You have set a new standard in local historical publishing, and I offer my congratulations on a superb piece. The page layouts are so interesting, with their mix of photos, facsimiles, sepias, fragments of topo maps, and so on. It is a very geographical piece, as well as historical, and easy to follow through the Pickering area. I cannot imagine how much of yourself you have put into this. Just the collecting of material and keeping it all straight must have been a nightmare at times. I like the way the sponsors are worked in so visibly, yet unobtrusively at the same time: very clever. I look forward to spending more time with this remarkable book."

Anouncing a new book published in September by Penumbra Press. Edited by PTHS President John W. Sabean, this 300-page book contains Journals and Letters written by artist and book designer Thoreau MacDonald during the 1920s. The only son of Group of Seven artist J.E.H. MacDonald and named for Henry David Thoreau, his father's favourite writer, Thoreau MacDonald was one of the most influential book illustrators in the first half of the 20th century.

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PICKERING TOWNSHIP HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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