

A BRIEF HISTORY OF NEWMARKET

Newmarket is a very old and industrious town that is rich in heritage.

Founded in 1801 as a Quaker settlement, the agricultural community surrounding the Holland River was home to the first fur trading post and the largest farmers' market in the area. The first residents built lumber and textile mills, a tannery, and a distillery. The New Market quickly became the centre of agriculture, trade, commerce and small industry north of the "Old" market of Toronto.

In 1853 the Ontario, Huron and Simcoe railroad reached Newmarket. The railway station was the key to Newmarket's success. The railroad was the link to Toronto and Lake Ontario for business and industry, so mills and factories were built in areas serviced by the railway. Businesses moved here, the community prospered, and the population grew.

Newmarket was firmly established as the centre of commerce, and the most important village north of Toronto. It was incorporated as a village in 1857 with a population of 700, and as a town in 1880, with a population of 2000.

Newmarket has a strong awareness of its own past. Many of our streets have been named after our first settlers, and after the politicians, heroes, entrepreneurs, and colourful characters that shaped our history. Several local buildings have been identified as heritage sites thanks to their architectural or historical significance.

Throughout Newmarket and surrounding areas, historical plaques and sidewalk markers identify places of historical importance. During the summer, residents and visitors can enjoy walking tours of old Newmarket and learn about our fascinating history.

Click here http://www.newmarket.ca/userfiles/HTML/nts_I_330_I.html to learn more about designated heritages sites in Newmarket.

Click here http://www.newmarket.ca/userfiles/HTML/nts_I_347_I.html for a list of Heritage Sidewalk Markers.

Click here http://www.ontarioplaques.com/Location_DirectoryYork.html#Newmarket for information about local Ontario Plaques.

A FEW EVENTS IN NEWMARKET HISTORY

Newmarket, The Heart of the Rebellion of 1837

Newmarket was a focal point of discontent during the years preceding the Upper Canada Rebellion of 1837.

On August 3rd, 1837, William Lyon Mackenzie organized the first in a series of meetings leading to the Rebellion. This meeting, held at the North American Hotel on Main Street at Botsford, was attended by about 600 farmers and others sympathetic to Mackenzie's cause. Attendance was double the population of the village.

When rebellion finally erupted that December, many of those settlers armed themselves and marched down Yonge St. to take the capital. A number of leaders from this area were later attainted for high treason. Two participants in the uprising were hung, one of whom, Samuel Lount, was from the Newmarket area.

Oil and Gas found under Newmarket in 1880s

In 1883 natural gas was found bubbling up out of the ground on the east side of town. The town fathers hired experts, who drilled wells and conducted tests which confirmed that oil and gas lies under the town, but not in sufficient quantity to make development feasible.

The Ghost Canal

In 1906, construction of a canal linking the Holland River to Lake Simcoe and the Trent Waterway began. The massive project was funded by the Federal Liberals, and was the subject of much controversy. Local politicians, farmers and businessmen were in favour of the canal system as an alternative to skyrocketing railroad freight rates, but the project was poorly thought out, and doomed to failure as there was not enough water to operate the locks. The ensuing scandal led to the defeat of the Federal Liberal government in 1911, and in 1912, with three lift locks, three swing bridges and a turning basin already constructed, the project was cancelled by the new government.

Streetcar to Toronto

In 1902 the electric street railway system reached Newmarket from Toronto. This street railway carried passengers and freight, including locally produced farm produce. Special trains were run from Toronto for the annual Agricultural Fair and for the Farmer's Market. In 1906 the railway was extended to Sutton, carrying tourists from Toronto to the trendy summer resort of Jackson's Point.

SOME OF THE CHARACTERS THAT SHAPED OUR HISTORY

Elisha Beman, a major landowner and entrepreneur, made a significant contribution to the economic growth of the new community. Beman and his three stepsons founded a business empire consisting of mills, stores, hotels, a stagecoach line, and other businesses.

Dr. Christopher Beswick was the first doctor to practice north of the Oak Ridges, arriving in 1811 with Quaker settlers from Pennsylvania. Dr. Beswick was instrumental in preparing the constitutions and bylaws for new organizations in Newmarket. In 1805 **John Bogart** built a saw-mill where the community of Bogarttown is today. This was followed by the construction of a grist mill in 1806.

Eli Corbiere was the mail carrier nicknamed Fleetfoot because he covered the forest trails between Newmarket and Barrie and Midland at a trot long before there were roads.

Dr. John Dawson arrived in 1830 and purchased 400 acres running from Bathurst St. to the Holland River. His servants built a log home where his family lived during the construction of a brick, Georgian mansion which was completed in 1837. The manor house became a target during the Rebellion, but it was protected by a war party of Indians for whom Dawson had provided medical care.

Eli Gorham arrived in Newmarket in 1808 with two of the revolutionary new wool carding machines. His mill was the first of its type in Upper Canada. By 1836 the Gorham Woollen Mills were the community's biggest industry.

A grist mill, powered by the East Holland River, was constructed in 1801 by **Joseph Hill** at what is now known as Fairy Lake. Mr Hill also built a tannery and a general store, as well as additional mills.

William Roe became a war hero at the age of 17. Roe was employed by the Receiver General when war broke out with the Americans in 1812. He was entrusted with the colony's gold and silver reserves, which he managed to smuggle through enemy lines upon the capture of York.

North Richardson was a notary public and post office clerk who arrived from Britain in 1805. He returned to Britain to fight in the war against Napoleon, and held the rank of major at the Battle of Waterloo. "Lord North" returned to Newmarket a war hero.

In 1801, **Timothy Rogers** and his followers, 40 Quaker families from Vermont and Pennsylvania who were fleeing the American Revolution, were granted farms on Yonge Street for the formation of a Quaker settlement. Their homes and farms were built on the fertile lands close to the Holland River, an important trading artery for both Indians and fur traders.

Robert Simpson opened his first business on Newmarket's Main Street in 1858. In 1971 Simpson moved to Toronto and, along with Timothy Eaton became one of Toronto's two department store kings.

For more information about the colourful history of the Town of Newmarket, or contact:

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