Remember Markham

Newsletter of the Markham Historical Society and Markham Museum

Editor: Lorne R. Smith Summer, 2026

O YEZ! O YEZ! O YEZ!
All those gathered here today, Take Heed

As the Official Town Crier for the City of Markham
I bring forth this Proclamation of Great Significance

It is a well-known fact that 57 years ago, a group of like-minded residents of Markham banded together and founded the Markham Historical Society.

The year was 1969. The Society was then, and still is, a volunteer-driven organization, dedicated to preserving, researching and celebrating Markham's history.

The Society has been instrumental in curating local history initiatives, publishing a newsletter and books and the founding of the Markham Museum in 1971. History is essential for understanding the present, shaping identity and preparing for the future by analyzing past successes and mistakes.

It provides context for current global affairs, fosters critical thinking and reveals how decisions affect societies over time.

Studying history offers perspectives that foster tolerance and empathy. If ever there was a time for researching and celebrating Markham's history, it is right now, during our current geo-political culture. On behalf of all the generations who have, and will benefit from the work of the Markham Historical Society,

I hereby say,
"Thank You"
and welcome to the Annual General Meeting of the Society.

This Proclamation is Declared on this 14th Day of April in the Year of our Lord, two thousand twenty-six.
God Save the King



Coming Events

Monday, September 14, 2026
Fall BBQ at the
Pavilion at Markham Museum
6:30 p.m.

Christmas Gathering
December, 2026
Date and time to be announced

Editors Message

By Lorne Smith



Markham Historical Society was pleased to welcome the 2025 Annual General Meeting at Bethesda Lutheran Church, 20 Union Street, Unionville on April 14, 2026. Many of those present enjoyed a brief tour of the sanctuary after the AGM. The building was originally erected in 1862 on the east side of Kennedy Road on the hill north of 16th Avenue where Bethesda Lutheran Cemetery is currently located. The building was relocated, brick by brick, to its present site at 20 Union Street in 1910. An addition was added in 1992-3 and the building totally updated, just in time for the 200th anniversary of the Bethesda Congregation in 1994. The congregation takes its origin from the arrival of the 67 German Lutheran families with William Berczy in 1794.

The A.J.H. Eckardt family donated a new pipe organ by the Lye Organ Company in 1913. This organ, while upgraded over the years, is still in use in 2026. An organ recital by the celebrated Dr. Vita Kalnciema of Riga Latvia was held on the Saturday following the AGM.

The AGM was delighted to host Markham's own Town Cryer, John Webster and his wife Mary. John opened the meeting with the above original CRY. John entertained the members and friends with stories of the start of his career, description of his uniform and his experiences over 40 years as of 2027. His career started when he rented a costume from the famed historical Malabar Limited rental store in Toronto and took on the task of welcoming visitors to Markham Fair and directing them to the leading events that would interest them.

The next year Mayor Carol Bell invited him to lead the Christmas Parade and formally had Council name him as Official Town Crier for the "Town of Markham". This was necessary so he could join the Ontario Guild of Town Criers. This gave John the "authority" to compete in competitions across Canada and the United States of America.

John shared stories of some of his many events (one year he had 225 events) including Markham Day at the Dome Stadium and the CNE, weddings, Santa Claus parades, 200 Yonge Street celebration, IBM Lab opening in Unionville, Bata Shoe Museum, AppleFest, Markham Bicentennial in 1994 and welcoming Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip at the CNE. John was instrumental in hosting the World Town Crier Championship in 1993 in Markham. John and Mary have represented the City of Markham at the StadmauerFest in Nordlingen, Germany and Lazy Days celebration in Cary, N.C. John has also been appointed as the Official Town Crier for the City of Cary, N.C. John shared with the group that he was in Nordlingen, Germany and officially announced to the City at a parade that Queen Elizabeth had just died. Another of John's favourites has been at Official Canadian Citizenship Ceremonies.

Thank you John for a very interesting demonstration of your 40 years of volunteering for the City of Markham as the Official Town Crier.

The following directors were re-elected for 2026: Doug Denby, George Duncan, Tom Farrar, Esther Lewis, Manfred Sallaberger, Carol Smith, Lorne Smith.

Plans are underway for our next meeting as a pot luck supper at the Pavilion at Markham Museum on Monday, June 8, 2026.

The Tremont Restaurant

By George Duncan

The Tremont House Hotel, built in 1873, stands at 123 Main Street North as a shuttered historical landmark with an uncertain future. A hotel has stood on this site since the 1840s. When our family moved to Markham in 1998, at least a couple of the storefronts that occupy the front section of the former hotel were still in use. I bought a painted kitchen chair from an antique shop there. When the last businesses closed, the old building was boarded up and has been vacant ever since.

Looking back to brighter days, in the mid-1940s the Tremont House was the location of the Tremont Restaurant – "The House of Good Eats, Sodas and Light Lunches." The memory of this phase in the history of this Markham Village property was revived in the summer of 2021 when Lorne Smith received a donation of a collection of old black and white snapshots of the central part of the village. The source of the photos was a family residing in Minden that had a connection to Markham in the 1940s.

One of the photographs shows Bill and Nora Mitchell standing on the steps of a restaurant located at

the northern end of the old hotel – the Tremont Restaurant. A note with the photograph dates the image to about the year 1946, when this couple were helping out with the running of the business. From the photograph, the Tremont Restaurant looked like it was a nice place to eat.

In the collection of photographs there were other views of the old hotel from around the same time period. A barber shop occupied a storefront at the southern end of the building. Lorne Smith remembers that the barber's name was Art Rae. At this time, both the upper and lower parts of the hotel's front verandah were still in place. The central section of the verandah, containing the main entrance to the Tremont House, was open, and the storefronts were contained within portions of the verandah that had been enclosed. It was good to see this Markham Village landmark in its better days.

It seems like almost every small town has a diner like this, a place where locals go for breakfast or lunch. A place where the wait staff know their "regulars" and know how they take their coffee. In present-day Markham Village the T & T Bakery and Uncle Joe's are places like that. These restaurants are never part of a chain; rather they are one-of-a-kind businesses, most often staffed by their owners. In spite of their individuality, many are similar to one another in how they are set up, with a long counter and some tables, and the general type of menu they offer.

In small-town restaurants, hearty breakfasts with traditional bacon and eggs, home fries, toast and coffee are standard fare. For lunch, there will almost certainly be grilled cheese, BLT, and club sandwiches. The best ones have homemade soup, maybe even liver and onions. Some offer dinner (or supper, depending on what your family called the evening meal) as well. Dependable, traditional, simple food that is good more often than not. These restaurants are a community meeting place for locals, and offer decent, affordable meals for visitors. This is one thing that has not changed much since the days of the Tremont Restaurant.

My personal favourite small-town restaurant, though it is not in Markham, is the Kosy Korner in Haliburton Village. Some members of the historical society may know it. The Kosy has been in business since the 1930s, but over time has had more than one location and has had several owners. I especially enjoy going there for breakfast in the winter, when the locals are starting their day and having lively conversations about this and that. If I happen to be there for lunch, my go-to diner meal is a hot hamburger sandwich. Long live the small-town restaurant!



MARKHAM HISTORICAL SOCIETY Established 1969

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Membership fee: $20

Articles for the Newsletter are welcome

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Peach's Community

By Lorne Smith

The Peaches community is centred on Peach's United Church at the corner of McCowan Road and Elgin Mills Road, across the road from the Markham Fair Grounds. The church takes its name from the Thomas Peach family who owned the farm that the church sits on. The farm buildings are accessed from Elgin Mills Road to the west. The house and barn are still in good repair. The conditions of donation in 1864 included that the burial plots around any church that was built there were to be free. This condition has been sustained to the present day.

The Peach's church was founded in 1847 as a Primitive Methodist congregation and continued services until the 1965. The church and the cemetery continue to be administered by a committee of local people and a memorial service is held each year on the second Sunday of June. Everyone is welcome to attend.

It is most remarkable that one can stand at the corner of the church and look at row after row of monuments and recognize the family names of those who lived on the farms and properties along McCowan (7th Line) and Elgin Mills (18th Ave). It is truly a Peaches community burying ground.

But Peach's was more than just a church. It was a community rallying ground centred on the Seventh Line, Peaches Sideroad and Cashel Sideroad The ladies of the congregation met regularly in members homes. The attached photo, taken circa 1952, shows all of the ladies at the Harry Warriner farm home at Lot 21, Con 7.



Peach's Ladies gathered in Warriner Home @ 1952

Back Row: Fern Keith (lot 25), Isobel Nigh (lot 24), Lillian McCleverty (lot 23), Pat Warriner (lot 21), Flossie Miller (lot 29), Eunice Watson, Maise Warriner (lot 21), Mrs. Hisey (lot 26), Annie Hoover (lot 25)
Front Row: Lois Lewis (lot 25), Elva Kirk (lot 26), Mrs. Kirk (lot 26), Ev Sale (lot 21), Edna Nigh (lot 24), Marg Ferguson (lot 27), Myrna Watson (lot 26), Joyce Miller (lot 28)



The Warriner farmstead on lot 21, 10159 McCowan Road, was an outstanding example of a Markham farm in the 1950s. Harry and his son Jack kept a Guernsey dairy herd with whole milked shipped to Toronto, pigs, turkeys and they grew tomatoes and peas for canning. All that is left in 2026 is the lonely house built by the Haake family in 1855. The fields are now cropped annually with corn and soy beans but expect to be developed into housing in the near future. The fate of the house is uncertain.

Peach's community was also well known for its Men's hockey team, its Men's baseball team and its Ladies baseball team. The members of these teams enjoyed a yearly picnic at members homes until recently. There are only three members of the Men's teams still living.



Peach's United Church

It is interesting that these activities all centred around this little Peach's United Church on the corner. Within sight of the church there was another well- known family that is part of the Markham fabric. The home of Christian L. Hoover on lot 25 is located just to the east. The photo shows the large black walnut tree that stood in front of the Hoover home with Peach's church to the far left of the tree. Christian and his family were very active in the Wideman Mennonite Church on Highway 48 just one farm south. Christian L. was chosen by Lot to be a Bishop in the Mennonite church in 1862. Chris L. was born in the Hoover House now located at Markham Museum and a number of his Fractur paintings are housed at the Museum.





Fractur Paintings



Inside Peach's United Church, 2026



Peach's Monuments

And just east of the Hoover farm on the north side of Elgin Mills was an old swimming hole for the boys of the community known as Kirk's Creek, really part of the Little Rouge River. It was here by the old mill site that the boys and young men met after supper for a swim to eliminate the sweat and grime of the day.

Peach's is just one of the many four corner communities that were scattered over Markham Township. The church still stands on its original site as a symbol of the Peach's community that used to be. Sunday, June 14, 2026 was the most recent Cemetery Memorial Service with almost a full house of family descendants.



Warriner House, 2026



Warriner Homestread, 1960

The Friends of Markham Museum

By Cathy Molloy, Chair

The Friends are appointed by City of Markham Council, with a Memorandum of Understanding providing the relationship and responsibilities.

Generally, the Friends support the goals of the Museum as outlined in the MOU.

a. To study and collect the documentary and material heritage of the geographical area now known as the City of Markham from earliest times to the present.

b. To take an interdisciplinary approach to its subject matter, with exhibitions and programs that include archaeology, history and science, and

c. Presenting exhibitions and programs reflecting the experiences of all its citizens, from the earliest humans to make this area theirs to the most recent arrivals; the Museum's archival resources similarly offer the potential for research into the heritage of all City residents.

The Friends have 3 active committees which carry out this work:

a. **Museum Collection Committee** is responsible for making recommendations to the Board regarding all acquisitions and deaccessions of the Museum Collection in accordance with the terms of this Memorandum of Understanding.

b. **Executive Committee**:

i. Providing recommendations to the Board about advice to be given to the Museum Manager and the City regarding the operation of the Museum;

ii. Providing advice to the Members regarding the business affairs of the Foundation;

iii. The preparation of a Strategic Plan for approval by the Board and the Members;

iv. The preparation of a Business Plan for approval by the Board; and

v. Recommending appropriate candidates to the Members for their consideration for appointment to the Board.

c. **Development Committee**: responsible for developing the overall fundraising strategy of the Foundation, including but not limited to, recommending specific campaigns to raise funds and solicit donations to support the purposes of the Foundation.

Currently the by-law details that there are 12 members of the Friends of Markham Museum. People are encouraged to apply on line, notices are put on line by the Clerks Department, or recommendations can come from staff or other members of the Friends.

The Board of the Friends are Mayor Scarpitti and members of Council. They appoint the Foundation Members at an annual AGM. They also appoint the Chair of the Friends, Cathy Molloy and Treasurer, Vidyia Maharaj. In 2025-26 Mayor Frank Scarpitti, Councillors Karen Rea and Andrew Keyes serve from Markham Council.

The Friends was formed just over 10 years ago and has raised about $80,000 through events. Two significant donations have provided the Friends with funds specifically allocated to research and development. The largest of these, $150,000, came from the Markham Historical Society Book Fund that was donated by MHS around 2000. This fund is now called the Publication Fund. The second was a donation from the estate of Frank Johnson of $50,000. This fund is referred to as the Frank Johnson Endowment Fund.



The goal of the Friends is to create a better awareness of the Friends, to provide information about the Museum and the history of Markham to the wider community. Exactly how the Friends will do that will to be determined the next year.

Anyone interested in donating to a specific fund or creating their own memorial fund is invited to let the Friends or Museum staff know. The Museum staff and activities are funded through the City, rentals and program generated revenues. The funds generated by the Friends help the Museum develop better exhibitions, conduct research and purchase artifacts that otherwise would be outside the Museum budget.

Reesor Meetinghouse Hymn Sing Sunday, May 31, 2026

By Lorne Smith

Approximately 125 people with connection to the Old Order Markham-Waterloo Mennonite congregation gathered at the Reesor Meetinghouse at 7070 York Durham Line, Markham on Sunday afternoon, May 31 to sing the hymns of their past. On this beautiful afternoon former members from Waterloo joined the Markham descendants for traditional 4 part harmony singing without any musical instruments.

Clayton Reesor and his father Dale Reesor, great great grand son and great grandson of Bishop Thomas Reesor welcomed visitors to the recently restored church building on the York Durham Townline just north of Steeles Avenue. Singing Leaders included Louise Reesor Pogue, Randy Kraemer, Joyce Reesor and Bob Burkholder all directly connected to the early church. Refreshments were served outside in the church shed on a beautiful sunny afternoon.

Some visitors took time to walk throughs the very old cemetery beside the church visiting the burial site of many of the earliest Mennonite ancestors in this well maintained cemetery.



Inside Reesor Meetinghouse

June 8 Pot Luck Dinner at the Pavillion

About 25 members shared an incredibly beautiful evening at the Markham Museum Pavilion. The trees and grass and the weather were perfect for our very friendly meal together. We thank George and Linda for their excellent chilli and all of the salads and deserts by members to complement it. Everyone appreciated that Kate and Ron Layton have taken over the coffee and tea for the evening and for future meetings. Besides the great



Viewing Pat Wheeler Material



Refurbished Baptist Church

conversation everyone enjoyed George Duncan's brief story of a wooden plane that he explained was used in early house construction before the advent of powered machines. Lorne asked about members' first memories of seeing Television. Jack remembered the first hockey broadcasts from Toronto. Donna recalled a small TV with a large magnifying glass in front to enlarge the image. Gunter used TV programs to learn English after his arrival from Germany in 1954. People recalled "the Rockets", Ed Sullivan show, coronation of Queen Elizabeth, Howdy Doody show, and Front Page Challenge with Gordon Sinclair, Betty Kennedy, Pierre Berton and Host Fred Davis.

Finally members walked over to see the refurbished 9th Line Baptist Church. Gunter also brought along some examples of the works of Pat Wheeler, many of which had not been completed. He was seeking identification of people in some of the items.

All in all a most interesting evening.

A Wooden Plane

By George Duncan

This wooden moulding plane, which dates from the mid-nineteenth century, is designed to cut a beaded (rounded) edge and groove. This type of detail was almost universally used on door and window frames from the early 1800s to about the 1860s. The same detail is often seen on kitchen wainscotting, where the tongue and groove boards join. Moulding planes were among the numerous tools of a joiner, a highly-skilled carpenter that made doors, windows, trim and other fine architectural details in the pre-1870s days of the fully hand-built house. When planing mills containing woodworking machinery made the production of woodwork more efficient, hand tools like this became obsolete, with only a few craftsmen retaining the skill to use them.



A Wooden Plane

Jubilee Notice

From the Farmer's Advocate, June 1887

On the occasion of the Queen's Jubilee, June 22nd, we will be our office in the forenoon to read and receive suggestions, and to consider what way we can do most good to the Queen's subjects in Canada, or in all the British possessions. Suggestions are solicited by mail or otherwise from those who desire to devise means for doing the greatest good to the greatest number. Beneficial thoughts often occur to many of you, and should be made known and acted upon.

Town Topics

From the Markham Economist, Oct 24, 1918

St. Andrew's Presbyteian Church Anniversariy Services announced for next Sunday have been cancelled. Called Off–On account of the influenze epidemic the trotting races announced to be held at Markham on Saturday have been called off. The Anniversary Services in connection with the Locust Hill Methodist church have been indefinitely postponed on account of the influenze epidemic.

Move the Clock Back–Don't forget to move the clock back one hour before you go to bed on Saturday night. This is in accord of the Daylight Saving Act.

AppleFest Returns to Markham Museum with Fresh Experiences and More to Explore!

Join Markham Museum on Saturday, September 19th for their signature AppleFest 2026 celebration transforming the Museum's 25-acre site into a vibrant festival filled with fresh apple cider, hands-on activities, local businesses, talented artisans, and all things apples!

The Museum's famous cider mill will be running all day, pressing fresh Ontario-grown apples into delicious cider. Guests can also enjoy a variety of apple-flavoured treats, delicious food and beverages, family-friendly activities, capture memories at photos areas, explore heritage buildings with live demonstrations, check out engaging hands-on exhibitions, discover local businesses and vendors, and take in a full lineup of live entertainment on the Music Stage, sponsored by School of Rock.

New highlights include heritage craft workshops where guests can try their hand at craftsmanship such as leatherworking, wander through the Dog Zone for some tail-wagging fun in partnership with Markham Dog Alliance, and be amazed by lively performances at various locations across the site.

This year AppleFest will be presented by Don Valley North Toyota, They have always been a proud supporter of Markham Museum, sponsoring the popular trackless train, as well as other Museum events like Night at the Museum which offers free movie nights to the community.

Tickets to this beloved community celebration of fall, family, and local heritage will be available soon. Follow Markham Museum on their social media channels to be the first to hear all the latest updates on AppleFest 2026.

