

# *Jockey Hill:*

*A Brief History of Epsom*

*by Angela Ball*



PUBLISHED BY  
THE SCUGOG SHORES HISTORICAL MUSEUM  
VILLAGE & ARCHIVES



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*by Angela Ball*

*with research by  
Hilda Bailey*

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Ball, Angela  
Jockey Hill: A Brief History of Epsom  
(Scugog Shores Historical Museum)

ISBN: 0-9686714-0-3

Published by  
Scugog Shores Historical Museum  
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Text and layout editing: Michelle Ginter  
Printing: Print Three, Peterborough

Front cover: Village of Epsom, looking north.  
Courtesy of Donald Asling



## **Dedication**

Hilda Elizabeth Bailey (née Ashenhurst) was born in Goodwood, Ontario, on 10 May 1913. On 23 July 1938, she married John Bruce Bailey who predeceased her in 1983. Mrs. Bailey was a school teacher in Leaskdale, Scugog, Epsom and Port Perry schools. She lived in the Epsom/Utica area for 53 years and spent one year in Minden. She was a member of the United Church at Utica and belonged to several historical organizations.

Mrs. Bailey spent endless hours collecting and compiling the history of the Epsom area with the help of many of her neighbours. In the Epsom centennial year of 1976, Mrs. Bailey presented silver trays to many of the older citizens of the community.

Hilda Bailey passed away 28 January 1992, in her 79<sup>th</sup> year.

This book is dedicated to the memory of Mrs. Bailey.

## **Acknowledgements**

Thanks to Donna Tough, Marguerite Bowles, and Edna Diamond for assisting Hilda Bailey in compiling her research.

A special thank you to Donald Asling for his continued support of this project.

## Down Memory Lane

Fondest memories are a wonderful thing,  
When we turn back the pages of time  
Of those hardy folk who braved the wilds,  
Those ancestors of yours and mine.  
From their native land they came with pride,  
To start a new life on the other side,  
A refuge of hope, with added fear,  
To carve a new home, in a new land here;  
A vast expanse to do their will,  
A progressive life for them to fulfill;  
Their talents and hopes kept them alive,  
With faith in God, to help them survive.  
Many passed on in their building years,  
And leaving behind such sorrow and tears;  
More with allotted time, others lived on,  
Pioneers of hardship, then they were gone.  
If they could arise from their longtime sleep,  
Would they give us their blessing, or silently weep?  
So sit for a spell, and reflect awhile,  
Of those gone before, who by wit and wile,  
Have left us a Heritage we dare not forget,  
A true example we surely can set  
A goal and aim for a fruitful life,  
With hope and faith, perhaps some strife;  
No one can change what has gone before,  
But we can treasure our ancestry lore;  
Their faith and survival have been our gain;  
We hope their efforts have not been in vain;  
A bond of love and respect, forever to be  
A sacred page in our book of memory.

— Hilda Bailey

## Ontario County

In 1791 Canada was divided into Upper and Lower Canada. The area which would later be known as Epsom was located in Upper Canada in the Home District, with the government seat at Newark (Niagara). As the population increased in the Home District, there was pressure placed upon the government to allow a greater degree of local administration. Peter Perry, a prominent reformer, advocated the separation of a portion of the Home District into a new county.

Ontario County was formed by proclamation on 30 December 1853.<sup>1</sup> It originally consisted of the following Townships: Brock, Mara, and Rama; Pickering, Reach, and Scugog; Scott, Uxbridge, Whitby, Oshawa, and Thorah. What was once known as Ontario County no longer exists. In 1974 it became part of the Regional Municipality of Durham.<sup>2</sup>

Until the 1790s only the First Nations inhabited Ontario County. The first permanent European resident was Benjamin Wilson, who settled at the mouth of Oshawa Creek. Apart from Wilson and a scattering of other early pioneers, very little of Ontario County was settled until the early 1800s. Many of these early settlers were Americans. Pickering was settled by New England Quakers, Whitby Township by "Yankees", and Uxbridge by Pennsylvania Germans and Pennsylvania Quakers.<sup>3</sup>

The true tide of immigration began about 1830. There was a flow of United Empire Loyalists from the USA. Most of these families were granted land for their loyalty to the British Crown during the American Revolution or the War of 1812. English, Scottish, and Irish immigrants made up many of the later settlers to the area. Most of these early pioneers came to Canada with very few worldly goods. The first settlers possessed only the skills

necessary to accomplish the hard tasks ahead of them, a few tools, a determination to survive and their faith in God.<sup>4</sup>

The first established settlements in Ontario County were close to the lakes and rivers – Lake Ontario, Lake Erie, Lake Simcoe, and the connection waters. By 1854 Ontario County had a population of 30 000.<sup>5</sup>

## **Reach Township**

Major Samuel Wilmot surveyed the Township of Reach, named after Colonel Reach, in 1809. The land was originally surveyed in 200-acre lots, with areas reserved for the Clergy. Over the years these lots were divided and subdivided.

The first European settler in the Township was Reuben Crandell in 1821. Crandell came from New York, USA, to Prince Edward County in 1812. Eventually, he made his way to Reach Township and settled on the road leading from Prince Albert to Manchester. After Crandell established the first homestead in the Township, word of his efforts spread and other pioneers soon followed. In 1828 John Ensign settled where Epsom now stands. The small community established around Epsom expanded when the Shaws, Walkers, Silvers, and Ashtons entered the area the following year.<sup>6</sup> In 1833 and 1834 a number of settlers took up land around Greenbank, including the Cragg, Baird, and Patterson families.<sup>7</sup>

The first roads left much to be desired. Many were little more than rough, muddy trails. However, four major roads were planned through the Township, built to promote the settlement of the county. Of significance to the Epsom area was the Brock Road, which was surveyed in 1831. The Brock Road provided a direct route north from Whitby through Butlers Corners (now Ashburn), McKercher's Corners (now Utica), and Jockey Hill (now Epsom), all the

way to the rear of the Township.<sup>8</sup>

With the survey of the Township complete and new roads established, settlers began arriving in Reach Township in significant numbers.<sup>9</sup> Reach Township developed quickly. Squire Abner Head built the first sawmill in Reach Township in 1831 just west of Borelia. The first steam sawmill came into operation in 1854, built by A. Farewell in Seagrave. It seems the sawmill was not raised by the appointed date, as Farewell refused to provide liquor for the "raisin". The structure was later raised by the Sons of Temperance from Oshawa, Raglan, and Port Perry, with the help of other temperance men in the area.<sup>10</sup> In 1836 Captain George Leach opened the first store in the Township, in what was said to be the first frame building. A post office opened in 1846 with Leach as postmaster. By 1852 there were post offices in Port Perry, Manchester, Utica, and Epsom. Edward Asling built the first gristmill, which was later converted and driven by steam. Elder Scott of the American Missionary Society built the first school in the Township in 1827. The school was intended to serve the First Nations. The First Church was not built until 1848 when the Methodists built on Brock Road on the 11<sup>th</sup> Concession.<sup>11</sup>

## **Early Settlement**

The early settlers of Epsom faced great hardships and had to work very hard to build a home in the wilderness. Families emigrating from the Old Country, predominately England, Ireland, and Scotland, faced a 3 000 mile journey across the ocean (13 to 16 weeks on a sailing vessel) before docking at Halifax, Montreal, or Quebec.<sup>12</sup> With their few possessions they were transported by barge up the St. Lawrence to their closest destination and from there traveled inland, following Native trails to the property they had been granted by the Crown.

### *Obtaining Land*

There were a number of ways to obtain land in Reach Township and the Epsom area:

1. Crown grants were given to the United Empire Loyalists or military personnel who had demonstrated loyalty to the British Crown.
2. The Canada Company bought up land and resold their holdings at a profit.
3. Clergy reserves consisted of lands put aside for the church. However, over time some of these parcels of land were sold to settlers.
4. Soldiers settlements refers to a government body that leased and sold property to war veterans.
5. Land could also be bought through the Sheriff's schedule if the previous owners were forced to sell their land by default.

### *Patent Rights*

Many patent owners never saw the land they had filed for. Others were forced to abandon or sell the land when they were unable to meet certain government expectations. Many properties were occupied by squatters, settlers who had either lost the patent rights by default of taxes or who had yet to receive title to the land from the original patent owners.

### *Canada Company*

The Canada Company was incorporated in 1826. This company purchased over two million acres of land in Canada and then resold its holdings for a considerable profit. The Canada Company was once referred to as "famous for speculations, schemes and companies in the City of London." However, while profit making, the company did provide land for early settlement in the Epsom area. In fact, it enabled many settlers who were not assured of obtaining property through granting agencies to secure their own land.<sup>13</sup>

### *Clergy Reserves*

In the Act of 1791, establishing the provinces of Upper and Lower Canada, the British Government set apart 1/8 of all the Crown lands for the support of a Protestant clergy. These lands were secularized by the Canadian parliament in 1854 and the proceeds applied to other purposes, mainly educational.<sup>14</sup>

### *Sheriff's Schedule*

These were properties on which the previous owner had failed to pay taxes, clear land or had abandoned the ownership of patent lands. In cases such as these the lands were sold by Sheriff's schedule. The land was posted for sale and often bought by land dealers who sold the lot as a whole or in parcels. Jason McDougall was one such man who bought up land in Uxbridge, Scott and Reach Townships.<sup>15</sup>

### *Settling the Land*

The early settlers who claimed land in the Epsom area had to blaze trails through the forest where no roads existed. The First Nations were friendly, and from them the early settlers learned many survival skills. The early settlers cooperated with each other to clear land and build homes. Work bees were popular and people gathered for logging bees, barn raisings, butchering bees, apple-paring bees, quilting bees and sugaring-off bees.

Early log cabins were often only 1 or 2 rooms and had one window that was boarded up in the winter until glass became available. Those settlers who had to make their furniture did so, making up for lack of skill with a lot of ingenuity. A huge stone fireplace took up one end of the cabin, providing both heat and light. Iron pots and a griddle for cooking hung from a crane. In the summer, much of the cooking was done outside over fire pits.<sup>16</sup>

The settlers were surrounded by dense bush and had to

clear the land to plant crops. Tree stumps were saved to make stump fences. Brush was separated from anything that could be used for firewood and burned. The ashes were saved and processed to produce potash and pearl ash, a salable product.

In the spring gardens, orchards and crops were planted. Turnips, potatoes, wheat, and vegetables were popular. Eventually corn became a basic staple as well. Ploughs were homemade and pulled by oxen. Grain was sown by hand and harvested with a sickle, left to dry in the field and then taken to the barn to be threshed with a flail.

Maple trees were tapped in spring, and the sap was boiled to produce delicious maple syrup and maple sugar. Wild fruits and berries were gathered every year to add variety to the settlers' diet. Herbs were dried to be used in cooking or for medicinal purposes. Wild animals, such as deer, rabbit, bear or turkey provided fresh meat for these early settlers.

Men worked in the fields, hunted and cared for the livestock. Women worked in the home, cooked, baked, spun wool into yarn, made soap, candles, clothing, and raised the children. During planting and harvest the women and children joined the men in the fields.<sup>17</sup>

Most villages began with a gristmill. Soon merchants and tradesmen moved into the area and the community began to emerge. Community was very important to survival in early years as everyone pulled together in times of need. The community also gathered to have fun in the form of ice skating parties, garden parties, or horse and cutter racing. The church was often the centre of the community. The church not only provided religious guidance, but also a social arena in the form of choir, the women's auxiliary, anniversary suppers, or box socials. As in Epsom, a minister often had two or three churches within his responsibility.<sup>18</sup>

The school was the other important centre in the village. The first schools were made of logs; later schools were framed or bricked. At one time, a schoolhouse could be found on nearly every concession road in the Township.



During the era of the one room schoolhouse there were no buses to transport children. Children walked to school each morning. School often began at 9:00 a.m. with the ringing of the bell, a bible story and a hygiene inspection by the teacher. Each day the children's hands and fingernails were checked for cleanliness.

These one-room schools housed grades one to eight. The three R's were taught: reading, writing, and arithmetic, as well as history, geography, and grammar. However, in early days education was not compulsory, and often was not a priority for many families. Generally, the children's first obligation was to the family and home. Children often stayed home from school to help on the farm, or help in the home and with the rearing of siblings. Over time the need for education increased and children were encouraged to attend classes and get a good schooling. The schoolhouses in Greenbank and Epsom are still used today for educational purposes. Once entire schools within themselves, they now house only one class of the new school built beside them.<sup>19</sup>

## **The Village of Epsom**

The Village of Epsom (Fig. 1) is situated between Uxbridge and Port Perry comprising of parts of lot 6 and lot 7 in the 7<sup>th</sup> Concession of Reach Township. The village borders Reach Road, now Regional Road #8.

The first settlers to the Epsom area were John Ensign, John and Thomas English, Timothy Monroe, Hugh Monroe and Silas Page. They were here in the area for several years before filing for ownership of their lands.<sup>20</sup> Most early settlers to the Epsom area were Pennsylvania Dutch or of English, Irish or Scottish descent.

In 1811 the patent owner of the 200 acres located at lot 6, Concession 7, was a Mr. John McNarin from Dickson's Landing, Stormant County. In 1832 McNarin put the

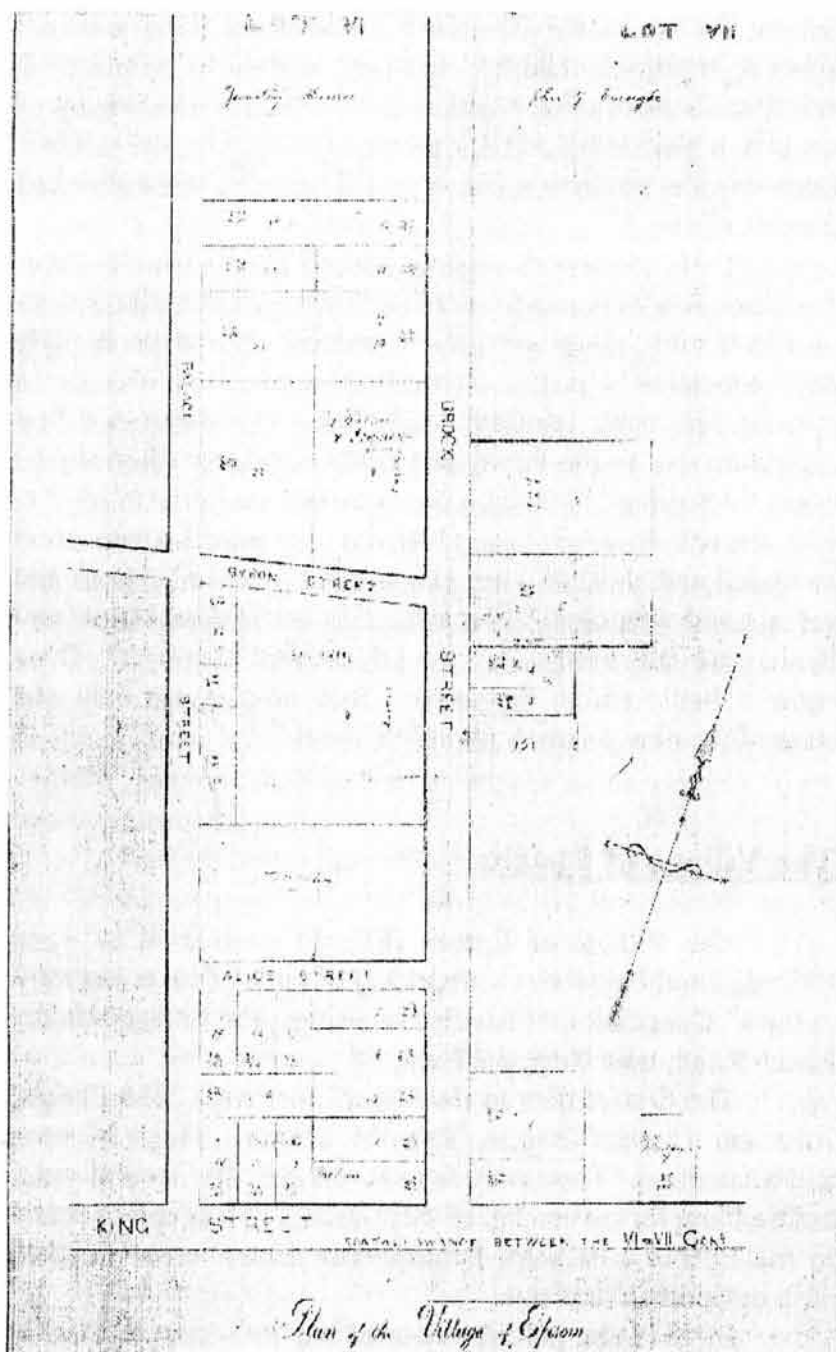


Figure 1: Plan of the Village of Epsom, 1860.

roperty through to a Sheriff's schedule for sale. In 1833 James McDougall, a land dealer, bought the land and sold it to Sophia Porteous. By 1846 Porteous sold the 200 acres to Hiram and Martin Stoutenburgh. Eventually the land was bought by Timothy Monroe, who divided the property and began selling off lots in what was to become the west half of the village of Epsom.<sup>21</sup>

The east side of the village was originally filed by Mary Bristol. She held the patent from 1811 until the land was officially sold to John Ensign in 1856. However, Ensign was one of the first settlers to the area and it is believed that he had been settled on the land since 1828. The south half of the 200 acres eventually became the village of Epsom. The north half changed hands many times. In 1856, 50 acres to the north was sold to Isaac Craig and 50 acres to Peter Stoutenburgh. A year later Alexander Harper owned the Craig property and returned it in that same year to Ensign. In 1857 Ensign sold the same 50 acres to A.T. Button who sold to Lewis Morrison. By 1859 Mary Latham had ownership of the entire 200 acres, which she sold to Hiram Crosby of Uxbridge. By 1860 Ensign had sold 50 acres in the north back to Harper and 148 acres to J.P. Plank. This is the last time the Ensign name appears on the property at lot 7, Concession 7.

The land to the north and south changed hands many more times and owners included Robert Ward and Leuton Miller. However, by 1877 Adam Earchman had control of the majority of the lot.

The village of Epsom was parceled into lots in the 1850s and 1860s. As was common for most villages in Reach Township, the municipal plan was drawn up in 1860 (Fig. 1). The village of Epsom was originally called Jockey Hill. Later, John Crothers (Curruthers), who thought the name was quite undignified, renamed the village Epsom, after his hometown of Epsom, England. In its early years Epsom was a thriving village consisting of at least one hotel, two stopping off places (hostels), a blacksmith shop, a carriage shop, a store and post

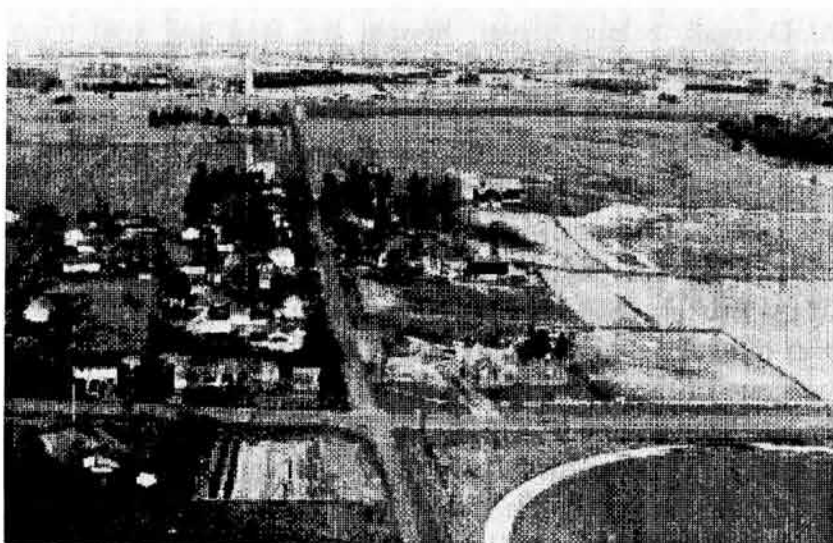


Figure 2: Aerial view of Epsom and the surrounding area.  
*Courtesy of Donald Asling.*

office, a school, a church and parsonage, a weighing scale and a grain storage area.<sup>22</sup>

The name most often associated with the blacksmith shop was William Terry, and with the carriage shop, William Costello. While the general store and post office saw many owners, Chester Asling is often remembered as storekeeper. The hotel as well had many owners including the Stoutenburghs, Hockins, and John Whitney. The weighing scales were located on the west side, at the top of the hill. They were "...not only used for weighing hay, grain and animals, but [were] used as a boxing ring."<sup>23</sup>

## Epsom Methodist Church

Long before the first church was established in Epsom circuit riders traveled the length and breadth of the county bringing the comfort of religion to those who were entirely cut off from the ministry. These circuit riders traveled on horse-back or on foot, held sermons in the homes of early settlers, organized camp meetings and presided over weddings and funerals.

The first church built in the Epsom area was a log church situated on the corner of the 8<sup>th</sup> Concession and Brock Road, north of Epsom. No date of construction has been found, but it is believed that laymen, Father Crosier, and Father Ward provided religious guidance in this old log church to the earliest settlers. Eventually, a second church was built adjacent to the 9<sup>th</sup> Concession. This later became the Bethesda brick church, which is no longer in existence.<sup>24</sup>

The Wesleyan Methodist Church (Fig. 3), now the United Church, was built in 1868 on lot 12, at the north end of

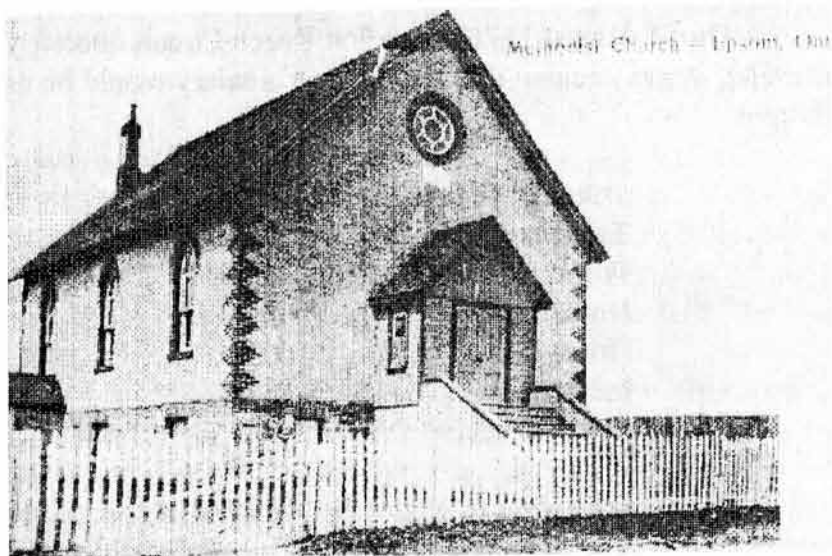


Figure 3: Epsom Methodist Church.

the village. The land, originally owned by Timothy Monroe, was sold to Thomas Demerest of Percy Township, Northumberland County by 1866. The lot was later sold to George Hargrave, a farmer, who sold the lot to the Church Trustees in 1868 for 79 pounds, 1 shilling, and 10 pence. The trustees at that time were Robert Irving, James Hurd, John Dalby and Jacob Bongard.<sup>25</sup>

The church was built of prime lumber and later raised and bricked. Village residents recall that "Hugh Monro, while harrowing with a yoke of Oxen on his farm half a mile east of Epsom, watched carpenters put up the first bent of the Epsom United Church."<sup>26</sup>

In May 1876 a meeting was held in Whitby, the seat of the Whitby District of the Methodist Church of Canada. The secretary recorded the following: "Passed a resolution that Prince Albert Circuit be divided and three appointments namely Utica, Greenbank and Epsom be a new circuit. The same being sanctioned at the conference held in Peterborough and called the Reach Circuit. Rev. George Richardson to be Superintendent."<sup>27</sup> And so in 1876 the Reach Circuit became a reality.

On 14 August 1876 at the first Reach Circuit quarterly meeting, it was decided that the minister's salary would be as follows:

Salary to be	\$300.00
Table expenses	\$250.00
Wood for fuel	\$ 36.00
Horse shoeing	\$ 5.00
Horse keep	\$ 60.00
Incidentals	\$ 15.00

During a meeting in November of 1879, a committee was nominated by Reverend Bishop to produce plans and specifications for a parsonage. The committee consisted of

Brothers Crosier, Stovin, Warden, Hilson, Scott, Linton, and J. Scott. On 20 December 1880, during a meeting held in the Epsom church to appoint trustees for the Reach circuit, a motion was made that a parsonage be built in Epsom.



Figure 4: Epsom Parsonage.  
*Courtesy of Donald Asling.*

Timothy Monroe provided the lot on which to build the parsonage. Prior to the building of the parsonage the minister lived with members in the circuit or commuted from his residence in Uxbridge. The allowance for commuting in 1880 was \$0.75 round trip, which did not include feed for the horse.<sup>28</sup>

In 1884 Greenbank became part of the Greenbank-Pinedale Circuit and Bethesda joined the Reach Circuit. In 1925 the Epsom Methodist Church became the United Church. By 1955 the Church at Bethesda closed, leaving only Epsom and Utica as members of the Reach Circuit. By 1966 meetings were taking place to discuss the amalgamation of the

Goodwood and the Epsom-Utica charge. When amalgamation took place, it was decided that the Goodwood manse should be used to house the Reverend, as it was the most recently built. Thus, the Epsom manse was sold at public auction on September 6, 1966. The sale bill read: "Auction sale of house and lot and furniture, the property of Epsom United Church in the Village of Epsom. 8 room frame house on large well treed lot, new oil furnace, roof in excellent repair. House has bathroom, 4 large bedrooms, large kitchen, living room and dining room, terms 10 per cent of sale and balance within 30 days. Sale of real estate subject to approval of church board terms on furniture cash."<sup>29</sup> The parsonage was sold and is now a private residence.

The Epsom church still stands today, a vital part of the community. Over the years, it has undergone a number of changes. The sheds that once housed horses and were used for storing wood have long since been torn down and a cedar hedge was erected in their place. The wooden steps to the church have been replaced with cement steps that face to the south. The original roof has been replaced with steel and the attic insulated. In 1949 hydro was installed. In 1961 the church front was renovated and a set of false brass pumps were installed behind the pump organ to make it resemble a pipe organ.

The Centennial year of the Epsom church was 1976. To celebrate, the walls of the church were repainted, the floor sanded and refinished, new wainscoting put over the old painted boards and pews refinished. As well, a new cross was obtained for the front of the church and new hymn books were purchased.

Throughout the years the church has housed the Sunday school, provided a meeting place for community groups like the United Church Women (U.C.W.) or Ladies Aid, and supported local youth organizations and education programs. Local residents will tell you that "Epsom Church has always been a family church". The majority of children



were not sent to Sunday School, but were brought to Church with their parents who stayed with them. This may explain why the church has remained open down through the years while others closed.”<sup>30</sup>

### *Village Lot 11*

Lot 11 was to eventually become part of the church grounds. In 1877 the lot passed from Thomas McDowell to George Crothers who later sold the property to his son John. John Crothers remained on the property until his death. The property was left to his two nephews who sold the lot to Richard Terry in 1914. The lot was then sold to William Watson and eventually to Reverend Denny who in turn gave the property to the church board for \$1.00. Lot 11 is now part of the parking and lawn of the Epsom United Church.<sup>31</sup>

### *Record of Ministers*

The following is a list of Ministers who have presided over the Epsom congregation.<sup>32</sup>

Prior to 1876: Reverend Demerest and 4 lay ministers

Wesleyan Methodist Church	The United Church
1876-78 Rev. George Richardson	1924-36 Rev. J. Denny
1878-79 Rev. W. Young	1936-37 Rev. S. Elliot
1879-82 Rev. George Bishop	1937-40 Rev. A. Bushell
1881-84 Rev. W.C. Washington	1940-42 Rev. A. Jenner
1884-85 Rev. John Harris/Harrison	1942-47 Rev. B. Eyre
1885-88 Rev. H. Manning	1947-49 Mr. R. King
1888-89 Rev. N. Wellwood	1949-51 Mr. R. Kaill
1889-91 Rev. T. Snowdon	1951-54 Mr. J. Hill
1891-92 Rev. W. Lloyd	1954-55 Mr. H. Burtch
1892-93 Rev. Shore & Rev. Smith	1955-56 Rev. G. Graham
1893-94 Rev. D. Lewis	1956-57 R. & P. Newman
1894-95 Rev. P.H. MacDonald	1957-58 Mr. E. Henderson
1895-99 Rev. W. Learoyd	1958-59 Mr. C. Lacey
1899-1903 Rev. D. Franks	1960-63 Mr. N.K. LeGrow
1903-04 Rev. R.J. Husband	1963-65 Mr. RW Edwards
1904-05 Rev. Barker	1965-66 Mr. R.D. McKinley
1905-06 Rev. J. Wheatley	1966-68 Mr. L.R. Ingleby

1906-07	Rev. Harper	1968-70	Rev. V.I. Thormin
1907-08	Rev. R.H. Brett	1970-71	Mr. J. Hopkins
1908-10	Rev. Sinclair	1971-72	Mr. R. Thompson
1910-14	Rev. T. Laidlaw	1972-73	Rev. A. Foster - R. Thompson
1914-17	Rev. E.C. Hunter	1973-74	Rev. Scott – Mr. K. MacDonald
1917-18	Rev. F.M. Bellsmith	1974-76	Rev. Scott – Mr. M. Ward
1918-19	Rev. J.J. Coulter	1977	Rev. Pendleburg
1919-21	Rev. S.D. Dinnick	1980	Rev. E. A. MacManiman
1921-24	Rev. P. Tiller	1986	Rev. Nancy Waterman
		1991	Rev. Jim Bewell
		1993	Rev. John Burton and Rev. Heather Burton

## **Epsom School - S.S. 11 Reach**

### *Early Schools*

The First Nations were the first to be provided with schooling in Reach Township. In 1827 Elder Scott of the American Missionary Society established a log school on the site of present-day Port Perry. The first school for the new settlers was built at Dayton's Corners (now Prince Albert) by Reuben Crandell, Hurd and Dayton in 1828. Mr. Cull, a Scotsman, was the first teacher. While teaching at Dayton's Corners he boarded with local settlers.<sup>33</sup>

In the early 1800s the Epsom/Bethesda area boasted one frame school and two log schools, one located on the Barber property off Reach Road, and the other on the Wright farm north of Epsom.

Before the first schools were built, settler children were taught at home by their parents, who had often received a formal education in their homeland. The first schools in Reach Township were very primitive, rudely constructed log buildings comprised of a single room heated by a fireplace. Often the desks were little more than long shelves pegged to

the wall with wooden benches for seating. There were often no chalkboards, few maps and books and nothing but a hickory stick to maintain order.<sup>34</sup>

Children walked to school, often bare foot in the summer time. All eight grades were taught in this one room school, older students often helping younger students with their lessons. Students had to provide their own paper, pens, ink and slate boards. Paper was scarce and expensive, so students learned by memorization, by rote, or wrote out lessons on their slate boards. Many schools were kept open all year long. However, fewer students attended in the spring, summer and fall, when children were needed at home on the farm.

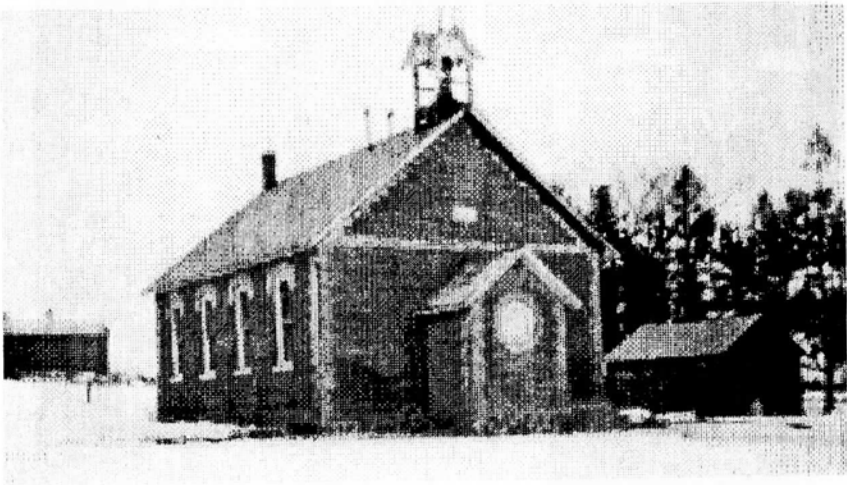


Figure 5: S.S. #11 Reach.  
*Courtesy of Donald Asling.*

*S.S. #11 Reach*

Until 1876, and the building of the new school, the old log school on the Barber property, as well as the log school on the Wright farm were used by Epsom residents.

Village lot 1, of lot 7, concession 7 was originally bought from Adam Earchman to build School Section #11 (Fig. 5) in Epsom. The red brick school measured 40 x 30 x 28 and was built by an old country gentleman, Mr. Jim McCalpan. At the school's opening, the school board consisted of Edward Ashton Sr., Thomas Watson, and Adam Earchman. The first teacher of S.S. #11 was Mr. Charles Lockyer who had a third class certificate and was paid \$300.00 a year.<sup>35</sup>

When the school opened in 1876 the school section extended from the Uxbridge town line to the Centre Road (Hwy #7 & #12) and from the north side of the 6<sup>th</sup> Concession



Figure 6: S.S. #11 Reach Class of 1932.

*Back Row:* (L to R) Bill Osaduke, John Millman, Lorne Wagner, Don Asling, Hugh Rogers, Roland Armstrong, Muriel Philip (teacher), Margery Pogue, Dorothy Wagner, Grace Cook

*Middle Row:* Don Pomeroy, Doug Hart, Dorothy Prentice, Annie Osaduke, Matilda Dengler, Pauline Osaduke, Laura Prentice, Jean McDonald, Laura Roger, Marian Locke, Catherine Denny, Florence Cook

*Front Row:* Earl Geer, Roy Wilson, Fred Wagner, Ivan Rogers, Earl Wilson, Gordon (Jeff) Prentice, Ray Munro, Harry Geer, John Locke

*Courtesy of Donald Asling*

of Reach to the south side of the 8<sup>th</sup> Concession. The school was originally equipped with a globe, box stove, five rows of double seats, an armchair and a few maps. During the summer of 1922-1923 the lobby was built with a new entrance, five new seats were added, the stove was moved, and five or six new pictures were added, as well as a map holder. Around this time John Ashenhurst of Goodwood put a new roof on the building. About 1926-1927 indoor toilets were installed. In the late 1930s new equipment was added including a teacher's desk, new chairs, sand table, mirror, hand basin, paper towel rack, yard stick, waste paper basket, blackboards, compass, water cooler and new maps. By the late 1940s the ceiling was lowered by Grant Prentice to make the school easier to heat. A more up-to-date stove was also added and single desks replaced the double seats. In the 1950s hydro was installed. It was also in the 50s that the school's interior was damaged by fire. "Although the fire was quite serious someone suggested that there was more smoke in the room a few years previous when some of the boys put an old truck tire in the furnace."<sup>36</sup> Luckily the school records, desks and equipment were saved.

There are many fond memories of the old S.S. #11. For



Figure 7: Chester Asling.  
*Courtesy of Donald Asling.*



Figure 8: Ella Lishman. 1925.  
*Courtesy of Donald Asling.*

residents like the Aslings, who had six generations of the family attend, the school has special meaning. It still stands today and is used for educational purposes.

### *Record of Teachers – S.S. #11 Reach*

There are no records of the teachers in either log schools on the Barber or Wright farms, but the following were teachers in the red brick school in the village:

1876 Charlie Lockyer, Charlie Wilson, Bill Bates, Mr. Lark, Charlie Ewers, Sarah Anne Scott, Arthur Allen, Bill Harper, Mrs. O'Burn, Olive Luke, May Walker, Arvella Reil, Miss Brown, Mary Asling, Al Gilory.

1912 Miss N. Laviolette

Chester Asling – 15 years at different intervals (Fig. 7)

1918 Miss Ella Lishman (Fig. 8)

1921 Annie B. Michie – Mrs. Clements

1921 Miss Flossie V. Rundle – Mrs. Johnson

1921 Miss Bertha M. Lowes – Mrs. Jamieson

1921 Miss Ella Lishman (Fig. 8)

1928 Miss Muriel Philip – Mrs. Doble (Fig. 6)

1933 Miss Irene Marie Brown – Mrs. Taylor

1935 Miss Margaret Puckrin

1939 Miss Gertrude K. Corbet

1943 Miss Kathleen L. Taylor – Mrs. Murray

1945 Miss Myrtle Jones

1945 Mrs. Hilda Bailey

1948 Miss Lena Rynard – Mrs. Ross Glendening

1948 Mrs. Hilda Bailey

1948 Mrs. Vivian Wilbur

1959 Mary Jean Till

1962-70 Mrs. Hazel Medd

Mrs. Jean Jeffery – Supply Teacher

### *Reach Central School #3*

On 12 November 1964, the Provincial Minister of Health, the Honourable Dr. M. B. Dymond, opened the Reach Township Central Public School #3 (Fig. 9). The new school,

located just beside the old school (S.S.#11) on village lot 1, was built by Winsom Construction Limited for approximately \$90 000. The one story yellow brick building consisted of four classrooms, office space, staff room, three storage rooms, furnace room, and washrooms. Eventually additional land was procured from Al and Annie Christie to enlarge the playground and accommodate baseball diamonds and a basketball area. At the time of its opening the School Board members included Byron Holtby, William Stone, Dorothy Mulholland, Neil Hunter, Earl Wilson, and secretary-treasurer P. Love. The first teaching staff at the new school consisted of Mrs. Lillian Midgely, Principal, as well as Hazel Medd, Katherine Crosier, Verna Geissberger, David Jack, Frances Sandison (music supervisor), Doris Armstrong (custodian), and Barbara Phair (Principal's assistant).<sup>37</sup>

In 1969 the Epsom School received its few minutes of stardom when the school was used as a movie set for a T.V. film. The Department of Education was involved in the production of a series of professional development programs

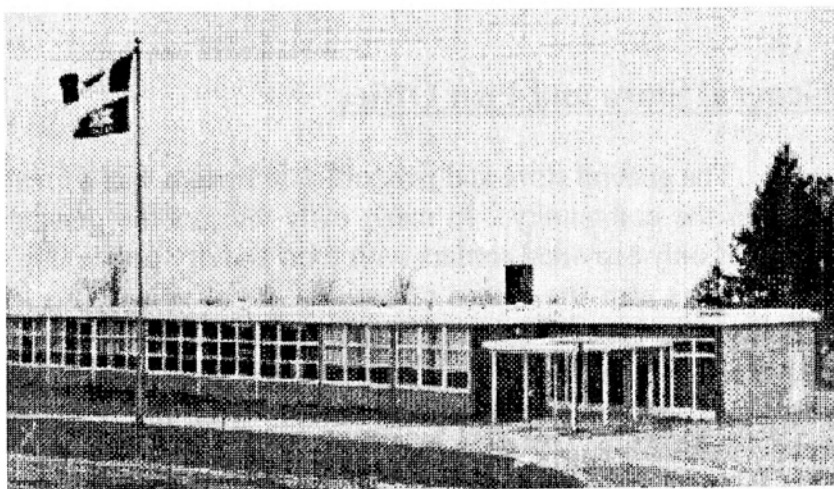


Figure 9: Reach Township #3 Central Public School. 1968.  
*Courtesy of Donald Asling.*

for teachers probing the development of children between the ages of twelve and fourteen years. This segment, entitled "The Children of the Land" included shots of the Principal, then Lillian Midgley, the grade seven class, and extensive coverage of Tina Ruhl and Robbie Croxall, two students of Epsom Public School.<sup>38</sup>

By 1971 fears that the school would be closed down surfaced. About 100 concerned parents and ratepayers gathered to discuss the future of Epsom Public School. Assurances were made by the Area 4 Programme Superintendent Howard Hempstead that the school would remain open as long as "there were a sufficient number of boys and girls to attend", around 90 students in the case of Epsom. Concerns proved unfounded and by the early 1970s both seventh and eighth grade students were being shipped to Port Perry.<sup>39</sup>

The little red school house S.S. #11 survived the transition to the new school and was used for part of the 1964 fall term as a classroom. It was later used as a library and is still used today as a classroom and resource room for the Epsom Public School.

## **General Store and Post Office**

The general store and post office in Epsom was a focal point in the community. In many early villages the general store not only provided settlers with food and dry goods (Fig. 10) but was also the centre of activity in the village. As in Epsom, many general stores housed the post office. Mail was delivered once a week, or perhaps every two weeks, by stagecoach. Villagers, as well as farmers from the outlying farms, assembled to collect their mail. The post office provided contact with the outside world and the general store provided a forum where neighbours could gather to gossip, to exchange news, to trade, arrange contracts, and conduct business. The general store also housed town meetings



designed to make plans for the village or solve community problems. Most early stores worked on a bartering system, where goods produced on the farm or in the shop were traded for products that could not necessarily be made in the home.<sup>40</sup> At the Epsom general store farmers often traded produce for supplies brought in from Uxbridge.

For the first settlers to the Epsom area it could take weeks to send or receive a letter. Mail had to be brought from the "front" in Whitby to the "wilds" of Reach Township. Kenneth Campbell was instrumental in early mail delivery. Campbell walked to the front and back every fortnight, collecting and delivering the mail to the settlers on his route. He received a small payment for the service.<sup>41</sup>

The post office in Epsom was established in 1852 on village lot 9 on the west side of the village. The building was built like a barn with a strong structure and good timber, sturdy walls and floors. It has often been speculated that it was built for some other purpose, perhaps intended as a hotel.

**GOOD NEWS**  
FOR  
**EPSOM!**

**T**HE undersigned have much pleasure in announcing to the inhabitants of Epsom and vicinity that they have leased the premises lately occupied by J. C. Buckins, Esq. and that they have just received and opened out a large and well selected Stock of the latest styles in

**DRY GOODS!**

**Choice Fresh GROCERIES,**  
Superior **BOOTS** and **SHOES,** a fine assortment of **HARDWARE,** and capital **CROCKERY.** A full assortment of **BOOK PAPER,** A large supply of the best **PATENT MEDICINES.**

Our Stock having been purchased principally for cash and at the best and cheapest markets we are prepared to sell at cheap as any other House in the county.

Try our fine flavored Young Hyson Tea at 50c. per lb; 14 lbs beautiful Sugar for \$1; 24 lbs Rice for \$1; 10 lbs good Cooking Raisins for \$1; 13 lbs new Currants for \$1. All other Goods equally cheap. The highest price paid for Butter, Eggs and other produce. Our motto—"Small Profits" and "quick returns." A liberal share of public patronage is respectfully solicited.

Cash for Wool.

**BROWNE & BRO.**

Epsom, March 31st, 1875

Figure 10: From the North Ontario Observer, Port Perry. 1875.

However, as Epsom already boasted a fine hotel and two hostels, it became the post office. Eventually, this building was to become a home, post office and general store, all in one.

It is believed that Timothy Monroe, or possibly A.T. Button operated the post office in the early years. In 1865 the property was sold to John Hutchison Kerr for \$801.00. John Kerr Jr. sold the property to Joseph Huckins (also spelled Hockins, Hawkins), a merchant in Brock Township, who lived there until 1874 when the lot was sold to Richard Bray. In 1877 Bray deeded the lot to his daughter Mary Quant and she and her husband Henry opened the first general store, attached to the post office. After Henry's death in 1887 Mary sold the post office and general store to Chester Asling, who was the last to operate the establishment and perhaps the best remembered storekeeper in Epsom.<sup>42</sup>

The post office served Epsom as well as the surrounding area. Residents remember the teachers at Bethesda would let two boys out early to walk to Epsom and fetch the mail once a week. The mail was sent home with the students for their family or neighbours who did not have children attending school. Often farmers would gather at the schoolhouse to help with the distribution to the wider community.

As far as can be told, the post office in Epsom ceased operation in 1914 with the coming of the mail courier system. Once closed, the store and post office was renovated into a private residence. The home has remained in the Asling family. For a number of years it was the home of Gordon and Jean Jeffery, Mr. Asling's granddaughter. Today, it is the home of Steven and Heather Moss, the great great granddaughter of Chester Asling.<sup>43</sup>

## Epsom Hotels

At one point in time Reach Township was dotted with hotels. Hotels in the country were about one mile apart. Hotels, inns and taverns were built for two reasons: to provide travelers with a place to stay the night, obtain food, seek company on long journeys; and to provide a place for villagers to drink or seek entertainment. The first inns or hotels were furnished with strong, but simple furniture: tables and chairs around which to eat a meal and beds to sleep in at night. Hotels and other stopping-over places were especially busy on market days and after harvest when farmers took their produce to market, or to the mills to be ground into flour. Hotels and inns often emerged as social centres of the community. Here villagers would gather to hold school meetings, discuss social events, or attend club dinners or auctions.<sup>44</sup>

In its prime, Epsom sported one hotel and two stopping-over places. One stopping-over place was located on the Monroe farm. The other was owned by Nicholas Houck, a hotel-keeper by trade, who carried on his own small business in a log cabin just south of the Epsom Hotel. Houck was born in 1801 and came to Lower Canada by 1844. According to the 1861 census he and his wife Jane had six children Lucy, Mary, Adeline, Dan, Jordon and Abram.<sup>45</sup>

As far as can be determined, the first hotel-keeper of the Epsom Hotel, located on the west side of the village on



Figure 11: Abner Blueman.  
*Courtesy of Donald Asling.*

village lot 8, was the Stoutenburgh family. The Stoutenburghs bought the land from Sophia Porteous by 1846. The Stoutenburghs are believed to have built the first hotel around 1850. The Epsom Hotel was a large frame building with accommodations upstairs and an adjoining wing at the west end. A large stable was located further west on the lot to accommodate travelers animals and "rigs". By 1852 Timothy Monroe was in possession of the lot. By 1863 William Hamilton owned, but may not have operated the hotel. In 1863 Hamilton sold to Philip Houck who kept the Epsom Hotel for one year. Philip, thought to be a brother to Nicholas, not only ran the village hotel, but was also the first mail stage driver for the mail coming via Epsom and Utica from Uxbridge.<sup>46</sup> It is believed that Philip also operated the village post office in its early years. In 1864 the hotel was sold to William Boulton who in turn sold it in 1870 to John Bentley. Bentley and his wife kept the hotel until 1874. John Whitney, who is often associated with the hotel, operated the establishment in the late 1880's and bought it from Timothy Monroe in 1892. John kept the property until 1902; when he moved to Uxbridge he sold it to Norman Stuart.

Throughout its history, the Epsom Hotel had a number of owners and operators. Early records list the Blueman (Fig. 11) family as operators of the Epsom Hotel, as well as John Mortson and the Hurd (or Heard) family. Today both the hotel and stopping over places have closed and been converted to private residences.

## **The Blacksmith Shop**

Through the years various blacksmiths set up shop in Epsom. The blacksmith was one of the most important tradesman in early villages like Epsom. The blacksmith made hinges, latches, nails, locks, chains, kitchen utensils, hoes, axes, hammers and farming tools. The blacksmith repaired

farm equipment, made tools for the other tradesmen and mended household pots and pans. The blacksmith was also a ferrier. He worked so much with horses that he was often regarded as the local veterinarian.

The blacksmith shop was another social centre in the community. The walls of the shop were hung with posters and advertisements and men gathered there to exchange news while waiting for horses to be shod or plows to be mended.<sup>47</sup>

For a number of years village lot 1, located on the west side of Epsom, was associated with the blacksmith trade. Timothy Monroe sold the land to John Mortson in 1861, who was recorded as a blacksmith and hotel-keeper. John was

born in England in 1815 and upon arriving in Epsom is believed to have been both the smithy and hotel-keeper in the village. John carried on the blacksmith trade until his death in 1869. In 1865 Mortson had sold the home to John Ianson, a notable miller from Greenbank. Ianson never lived in the village, but bought and sold land and in 1872 Ianson sold to

**A Rare Chance for  
BLACKSMITHS.**

The Subscriber offers to Rent, for one or a term of years, that excellent and advantageously situated Black Smith Shop in the

**VILLAGE OF EPSOM!**

She will also rent the Tools, consisting of all tools necessary in a first class Blacksmithing Establishment. She also offers to sell the entire Stock at a bargain.

It but seldom happens that so excellent an opportunity is offered for entering on a business which may be made highly profitable. For particulars apply to the owner on the premises.

**MRS. SARAH MORTSON,**  
Epsom, April 10, 1873. 18-2w

Figure 12: From the Ontario Observer, Prince Albert. 1873.

Sarah Mortson, who turned the property over to John Mortson Jr., also a blacksmith (Fig. 12). Finally, in 1880 John Jr. sold the lot to William Terry, yet another blacksmith, where

Terry carried on the trade. Two years later Terry sold the property back to Mortson.<sup>48</sup>

William Terry is the best remembered blacksmith in Epsom. Terry was born at Monk Fryston in the Bradford area in Yorkshire, England in 1843. He came to Canada in 1871 with his brother Frank and spent the winter at Collingwood. Work was scarce however, and Frank decided to try his luck in the USA. William traveled to the Epsom area in search of the Watson family, who he had known in Monk Fryston. He located the family and two years later married Elizabeth Watson. He set up his first shop on the corner of the MacGregor farm at Bethesda. Once he was established in Bethesda, William set up another shop in Epsom on lot 5 across from the Epsom post office. He operated both shops simultaneously, working where the need was most prominent on any given day.<sup>49</sup> William and Elizabeth had a large family: Katherine born 1874, Richard 1876, John 1877, Ida 1878, Fred 1879, James 1881, and Sarah born in 1883.

## **The Carriage Shop**

William Costello is best remembered as the village carriage maker. Originally from Ireland, he set up shop on the east side of the village on lot 3 / 4. In the early years of the village, "medicine shows" were held above the carriage shop. The carriage shop was also used for Anglican Church Services and was the centre for voting at election time. William and his wife Sarah had a number of children: Herbert, Percy, Carey, Margaret, Farella, Agnes, Thomas, and Mariam. William Costello died on 18 February 1921 at the age of 84. He is buried in the Utica Cemetery.

The carriage shop went out of business when cars became popular. The shop was changed into a garage that Walter Rogers owned and operated. The shop is still standing today but is used primarily for storage.<sup>50</sup>

## Village Residents

In the history of any community there are individuals or families that play an important role in the development of the settlement. There are many such families in the Epsom area, far too many to list them all. However, the following families or individuals have been of significance to the village of Epsom and demonstrate the kind of people who have settled there over the years.

### *John G. Ensign*

John Ensign was one of the early settlers to the Epsom area, settling on lot 7, Concession 7, in 1828. There is a very interesting story about the origins of the Ensign family. According to the legend the Ensign ancestry dates back to the Celtic peoples who inhabited the banks of the Danube River. It seems these peoples were involved with the Caesars of Rome and from them received a ransom of gold, which they took over the Po Valley. Eventually they scattered to Switzerland and from there filtered into Germany, France, Belgium and the British Isles.

The Ensigns emigrated from Germany to the USA and then into Upper Canada. John and his wife Sarah had three children Justus, Datus, and Perus, all names significant to early Celtic religion and common to the years of the Roman Empire. Ensign and Monroe were instrumental in selling off lots of land to form the village of Epsom. John and his wife are believed to be buried at the Utica Cemetery.<sup>51</sup>

### *Timothy Monroe*

Timothy Monroe (also spelled Monro in early records) was one of the first settlers to the Epsom area. He was a relative to John, Hugh and Robert Monroe of Reach Township, who settled their land in the 1830s and 1840s, at approximately the same time as Timothy. There is some indication that Monroe settled in Epsom as early as 1832,



possibly as a squatter awaiting the opportunity to purchase land. He eventually gained control of 200 acres of land on lot 6, Concession 7, which eventually became the west half of the village of Epsom.

The Monroe family, Donald and Kathryn, emigrated from Rosshire Scotland to the United States. They applied for land grants as United Empire Loyalists and moved to Canada during or shortly after the War of 1812. They started off in the Kingston area and then moved to Thornhill by 1837. Timothy, who had been born in 1803, married Holdah Purdy in 1824 when they were both just 21 years of age. They had 2 sons: Oren, who died young, and William Purdy Monroe, born in 1826. Holdah died in 1828 and so Timothy remarried a year later to Elizabeth Button, believed to be a relative to A.T. Button of Epsom. Timothy and Elizabeth had 6 children John Newbury, born 1831, Sarah Kathryn, born 1834, James, born 1837, Mary Ann, born 1839, Newbury Button, born 1843 and Elizabeth, born 1845.

Timothy, Elizabeth and at least some of their children were on the south half of the Epsom property several years before Monroe received his deed in 1850. By 1852, Monroe had begun to sell off parcels of land to interested settlers. It is apparent that Monroe had a vision from the onset of carving a town out of the wilds of Reach Township. Most of what he sold were small "town lots" for example Philip Houck – 2 acres, William Bolster – ½ acre, William Oxtoby – ½ acre. The exception was the north half of the 200 acre lot, which was sold to Hugh McCullough in 1854.

The Monroe family lived in a log cabin before building a larger structure in 1870. The log building served for many years as a hostel for weary travelers or farmers en route between Uxbridge and Port Perry. The basement was divided into cubicles that served as sleeping quarters for those with little money. There was an accompanying carriage house and smoke house on the property. In 1890 Monroe sold his land with house, coach house, and orchards to Francis (Frank)



Earchman for \$7 500. Timothy Monroe died in 1892 at the age of 89, and is buried in the Presbyterian part of the Uxbridge Cemetery.<sup>52</sup>

### *The Stoutenburgh Family*

The Stoutenburgh family emigrated from Hesse-Cassel, Germany to the USA, and then to Upper Canada. They were given Loyalist status and received crown grants for their support of the British cause in America. The Stoutenburgh family owned land in Epsom, Utica and the Bethesda area. They operated three hotels in the vicinity: one in Epsom, another in Utica, and one in Strettonville. The Stoutenburgh family eventually moved on to Richmond Hill, Collingwood and the Barrie area.<sup>53</sup>

### *The McCullough Farm*

Hugh McCullough was born in Scotland in 1828 and immigrated to Canada in the early 1800s. Hugh was related by marriage to Robert McLaughlin, and was at one point in time employed in his carriage shop in Oshawa. In 1854 McCullough bought the north half of the 200 acres originally held by Monroe on lot 6, Concession 7. The McCullough farm lay directly north of the village of Epsom. According to census records a log cabin and later a frame home was built on the property. Due to illness Hugh was sent to a health centre where he passed away in 1891. Hugh's wife Dinah Bradley McCullough continued to operate the farm with hired help until their son Edward was able to take over the business.

Edward married Miriam Costello, daughter of William and Sarah Costello of Epsom, and built a new brick clad house for the family in 1896-1897. Over the years Edward made many improvements to the farm including the purchase of additional land. He had the first sawmill in the area and was the first farmer to have a car, a 1914 Model T Ford. Edward and Miriam had five children: Olive, Clifford, Harvey, Myrtle, and Drew. Drew worked the Epsom farm with his parents for

a number of years. He served on the parsonage board in Epsom, was the recording steward for the Church board for twelve years, and was a Trustee at the Epsom School for five years. Times were tough in the "dirty thirties" but by 1939 the family traded in their horses for an Allis Chalmers tractor. Miriam died in 1942 and Edward in 1944. They are buried in Prince Albert. Drew sold the farm in 1948 to the Powell family, ending almost 100 years of ownership by the McCullough family.<sup>54</sup>

### *The Earchman Family*

The Earchman family plays an important role in the history of the village of Epsom. Adam Earchman was born in Scotland in 1819 and immigrated to Canada with his wife Barbara, daughter Mary and nieces Isabella Elder and Mary Dunlop. Their sons Francis (Frank) and John were both born in Canada.

For many years the Earchman family owned land on lot 7, Concession 7 on the east side of the village. While Adam Earchman owned the lot the property housed two log cabins, one at the north end and the other just east of the old school. Adam Earchman was a member of the board of trustees for the S.S. #11 and it was from his family that the land was bought to build the brick schoolhouse on village lot 1. Francis took over the farm in 1874 with the passing of his father. In 1890 the Earchman family sold 50 acres to the north to Edward McCullough. In 1903 Frank Earchman sold 148 acres to Sam Sharpe. The Earchman family sold the remaining 15 acres of land in the village in that same year to John Ferguson.

The Earchman family is well remembered for building the first brick house in Epsom, begun in 1886. It remained the only brick home in the village until the 1960s.<sup>55</sup>

### *John Ferguson*

John Ferguson came from Yorkshire, England, to

Canada at the age of 24 and eventually settled in Reach Township as a farmer. John was a quiet, hard-working, contented man, which made him a favorite neighbour. He married Emma Porteous but never had children. John farmed his 15 acres of land, kept a couple of cows, chickens, and two horses. In 1918 Ferguson sold a parcel of land to the trustees of S.S. #11 to enlarge the playground. John died in 1927 at his Epsom home at the age of 80 years. Emma kept the home with her brother Johnny Porteous until she passed away in 1933 at the age of 84. The property was left to her brother Johnny. In 1938 Al and Annie Christie bought the property.<sup>56</sup>

### *Samuel Sharpe*

Many residents of Epsom remember Samuel Simpson Sharpe from his involvement in World War I. At the onset of the war Sharpe offered to raise a battalion within the county. Assisted by one officer, and five non-commissioned officers transferred from the 37<sup>th</sup> Battalion, the 116<sup>th</sup> Battalion was formed under his command. Many local residents remember the men marching through the village of Epsom on their way to war. Under Sharpe's command the Regiment, consisting of many local boys, went overseas to England on July 24<sup>th</sup>, 1916.

In England, the contingent marched to Westminster Abbey, headed by Colonel Sharpe. Bishop Ryle, Dean of the Abbey, addressed them: "My brothers, you have deposited in our keeping the flags of your own and your county's honour. In your keeping, sons of the Great Dominion of Canada, is deposited a splendid share in the honour of preserving and vindicating the Mother Country and the great Dominion overseas."<sup>57</sup>

The 116<sup>th</sup> Battalion served heroically while in France. Just after Vimy Ridge Colonel Sharpe himself went out to no-man's-land under cover of darkness with some subalterns and laid strips of white tape to mark breaches in the enemy's barb wire. There followed one of the largest and most successful trench raids of the season. In 1918 Colonel Sharpe

suffered a nervous breakdown and was brought home an invalid. He died in Montreal. Sam Sharpe was buried with full military honours and laid to rest in Uxbridge Cemetery.<sup>58</sup>

### *Pascoe and Elizabeth Luke*

Pascoe and Elizabeth Luke rented land from Sam Sharpe and operated the farm on lot 7, Concession 7, for sixteen years. The Lukes moved from Epsom when the farm was sold to Albert Bailey in 1916. In 1925 the Luke family returned to Epsom and bought land on the west side of the village. Pascoe passed away in 1937. Elizabeth remained in the house until her death. She is remembered with great respect by the community.<sup>59</sup>

### *The Bailey Family*

In 1916 Albert and Janet Bailey bought the farm owned by Sam Sharpe. Both son Malcolm and daughter Marjorie attended Epsom Public School, Epsom Church and Sunday school. Malcolm became interested in farming in 1924 at the age of twelve years when he bought his first calf from William Ackney, whose farm was situated at the south end of the village. From this early start in the business, Malcolm and the Bailey family built up a fine herd of Aberdeen-Angus cattle on their farm in Epsom, as well as on the other farm located just east of the village. The farms gained recognition across Canada and the USA, and their cattle were exported world-wide. Malcolm was the president of the Aberdeen-Angus Association for several years and traveled many miles across Canada while in this capacity. The Bailey family exhibited their prize cattle in all the local fairs, the Canadian National Exposition, the Ottawa Exposition, and the Royal Winter Fair and received the Memorial Ted McDowell Award for "Breeder of the Year". Malcolm Bailey passed away a number of years ago and the farm was sold out of the Bailey family in 1990.<sup>60</sup>

### *The Rogers Family*

The Rogers family is well remembered for their service in World War I and World War II. Walter Rogers was born in 1890 to Walter Sr. and Agnes Young, who farmed outside of Brooklin, Ontario. In 1915 he joined the Canadian Armed Services as a private and trained at Port Perry and Niagara-on-the-Lake. He went overseas with his contingent and served in France as a machine gunner. World War I was the beginning of modern warfare and the testing site of advanced weaponry. Many young people were injured or lost their lives in the conflict. In 1917 Walter was severely wounded at Vimy Ridge, where he lost one eye and part of his right ear.

Walter returned home and in 1918 married Ruby Ashton, daughter of Edward Ashton and Margaret Costello. In 1922 they moved to Epsom and bought the estate of William Costello, Ruby's grandfather - the noted carriage-maker. The carriage shop was transformed into an auto repair shop and garage. The Rogers had a large garden and fruit trees. They kept a cow and a few "Plymouth Rock" hens and mallard ducks. The Rogers' home was a favorite meeting place for both young and old alike on summer evenings. The clang of horseshoe pitching could be heard throughout the village, signaling that "they were at it again at Rogers' garage." Since the family was very musical they formed a local family orchestra using violins, piano and guitars and they were quite in demand for local functions and dances at Utica, Purple Hill, Quaker Hill, Brooklin, Myrtle, Manchester and of course Epsom.

Until electricity was installed, gas lanterns were used in the garage and Aladdin lamps in the house. The first gas pumps were hand operated and pumped a gallon of gas at a time. Later a pump with a 10 gallon glass globe was installed and the old pump used for coal-oil. Walt improvised and built the air compressor for the garage.

Walter and Ruby had three children, Hugh, Laura and Ivan. All three children followed in their father's footsteps

and served in the armed forces during World War II. Walt and Ruby lived at the Epsom property from 1922 until 1963, when they moved to Brooklin, Ontario. Walt passed away in 1964 at Oshawa General Hospital and is buried in Brooklin Cemetery. Ruby died in 1975 and is also buried at Brooklin.<sup>61</sup>

### *The Watson Brothers*

The Watson name is one often associated with the Epsom area. John Watson and his brother Thomas bought property in Epsom on village lot 7, land once held by Nicholas Houck. Lot 7 was divided in half, Thomas took the south portion and John the north, where each built their respective homes. John and Thomas were the sons of Richard and Catherine Watson of the 8<sup>th</sup> Concession and were carpenters by trade. John, Thomas and Thomas's son Richard were noted builders and repairmen of old buildings. They did a great deal of carpentry in the Epsom, Utica and Bethesda area. The McCullough barn was built by their crew, as were the homes of John Bailey and Pascoe Luke. An amusing incident occurred one day while the brothers were shingling a building and Meg Murphy, a gypsy of sorts, happened by. It seems a young boy called out "old Meg Murphy" as she wandered by. Meg, assuming the two shinglers were the culprits, began hurling stones at them. The Watson brothers knew her well, and quickly scrambled down to explain their innocence before any real damage was done.

John married Elizabeth Page of the Bethesda area. John and Elizabeth had no children and John passed away in 1925 at the age of 75. Both he and Elizabeth are buried at Utica Hillman Cemetery. Thomas was married twice; both his wives were relatives of the Earchman family. He died in 1919 and is buried in the Utica Presbyterian Cemetery.<sup>62</sup>

### *Levi Duncan*

Village lots 2 and 3 (west) changed hands many times before the property was bought in 1902 by Levi Duncan. As early as 1863 John McKercher had obtained the land from a mortgage. McKercher sold to William Pringle, a land dealer, who kept it for three years before selling to A.T. Button, a merchant and land holder in the Epsom area. In 1879 Button sold the lot to A.J. Dalby who sold it in the same year to William Watson. In 1881 lots 2 and 3 were sold to John Gibson who upon his death left the property to his daughter Martha Stone. Martha sold the land in 1895 to James Hillson. Finally, in 1902 the Hillson's moved to Uxbridge and sold the Epsom home to Levi Duncan.

Levi was born in 1865 and worked in the Epsom area as a labourer. He married Carey Costello, daughter of William Costello, and they moved into the house bought from Hillson in 1902. A sweet story revolves around the marriage of Carey and her sister Margaret. It seems that when Margaret and Carey were getting married, each, without the other knowing, had selected wedding dress material from the same bolt of cloth purchased in Uxbridge. Once the coincidence was discovered, the girls agreed that one should pay for the material (15 cents a yard) and the other would make the dresses. The Duncans had one daughter, Bertha, who attended Epsom Public School. In 1919 the family sold the house to William and Minnie Armstrong and moved to Toronto where Levi was employed at the Anaconda Brass Company. Levi and Carey are both buried in the Pine Hills Cemetery, Toronto.<sup>63</sup>

### *The Armstrong Family*

Village lots 2 and 3 are still held by the Armstrong family. The Armstrongs always kept the welcome mat out for friends and neighbours. Bill and Minnie had a large garden, fruit trees, a small flock of hens and a cow in the early years. The Armstrongs, whose property is located across from the



school, tended many a cut and bruise and their phone, one of first in the village, was always available for emergency phone calls. When Minnie and Bill passed away the house was left to their son Roland (Chap). Chap attended Epsom Public School, was in the armed services during World War II, and was employed at GM in Oshawa for many years. Chap passed away suddenly in 1979. His wife Doris and their son Tom still live in the Epsom home.<sup>64</sup>

### *The Asling Family*

The Asling family is well known in the Epsom and Greenbank area. In 1895 William White sold a 100 acre farm on lot 2, Concession 6 to Chester Asling, well known storekeeper, postmaster and school teacher in Epsom. Chester was a man of reserved disposition who was well aware of the importance of education. Chester was born in Greenbank in 1859 and attended Model school in Port Perry in preparation for a teaching career. He taught for nearly 40 years, 15 of which were spent in S.S.#11 Reach in Epsom. Chester married Jane MacGregor of Bethesda in 1883 and they had four children: William, Katherine, and Mary and Allen; the later two were born in the house on village lot 9. All four children attended Epsom School and church. Chester suffered a stroke from which he did not recover and died 18 August 1926. He is buried in the Uxbridge Cemetery.

Village lot 9 passed to Chester and Jane's daughter Kate (Katherine) Coates Cawker, who was a gracious lady and loved by all who knew her. Donald Asling, grandson of Chester and Jane, now owns the farm on lot 2 concession 6.

Don has many happy recollections of life on the farm. He writes:



“Our hardwood bush holds a great deal of different memories and as long as I can remember it has been a part of my life. As a boy, the big thrill in the spring was the boiling down of the sap in the big black iron kettles. Old pine stumps were used as fences in early years and we used these to heat the sap, although we had lots of hardwood, pine stumps didn’t leave as much ash and it was a great way to get rid of them. I have never understood how a piece of bacon hung over the top of the kettles would stop the sap from boiling over but it did.”<sup>65</sup>

## Epsom Today

The period of 1851 to 1871 brought about great changes in Reach Township. The introduction of mechanized agriculture, industrialization and the coming of the railroad eventually pushed aside pioneer methods. By 1872 Port Perry, as a destination on the Port Whitby and Port Perry Railway, was growing rapidly. Many local businesses picked up roots and moved from the outlying towns to Port Perry and Uxbridge, but at the cost of decline in towns such as Prince Albert, Roseville, Leaskdale, and Epsom.<sup>66</sup>

The village of Epsom has seen some changes over the years. The store, hotel, parsonage, and stopping-over places are now private residences. The main part of the hotel is still intact, though modernized. All that remains of the blacksmith shop is the shed which is now used for storage. The carriage shop is also now used for storage. The school is still in good repair and is used for educational purposes, and the church continues to be an important centre in the village.

Hydroelectric power came to Epsom in the 1930s and by the end of the 1940s most farms in the area were operating by hydro. A by-pass bordering the village was completed in 1965 to alleviate the flow of traffic through the village and make the streets safer. More houses have been built and street lights were installed recently.<sup>67</sup>

In 1976 Epsom celebrated its centennial. The year 1976 was chosen for the celebrations for two reasons: first, the school was built in 1876 and secondly, the majority of records pertaining to the church date from this year. Organized by the Epsom Centennial Committee, celebrations took place throughout the year. Letters were sent out inviting former residents to participate in the festivities. In January the Sunday school students hosted a pot luck supper. In February the Couples Club sponsored a pancake



Figure 13: Epsom Centennial Parade. 1976.  
*Courtesy of Donald Asling.*

breakfast. A variety of musical talents provided entertainment throughout the year including a singing group from Scarborough, and a barbershop quartet. Local talent was featured as well, including a number of performances by the Centennial Choir. Special church services were held each month and the church invited back a number of former ministers. A quilting bee produced a Centennial quilt, and a walk-a-thon and Strawberry festival was held in June. A pie social was held in November and a special Christmas Eve service was held in December.<sup>68</sup>

The highlight of the year was the Centennial weekend in August. The weekend kicked off Friday August 27<sup>th</sup> with student awards, a sing along and an antique display. Saturday featured a parade, the first ever in the history of Epsom (Fig. 13). Sports competitions followed as did the quilt auction, presentations to honorary citizens and a

barbecue. The barbecue was a huge success with over 600 people in attendance. On Sunday a Centennial Service was held at the Epsom United Church. The service was conducted by Reverend Archie Scott, student Michael Ward and guest Minister Reverend John Hunter of Aurora, whose father had been the minister of the Epsom church from 1914-1917. The morning included the dedication of a new cross, alter and communion cloth.<sup>69</sup>

In 1983 a contest was held at the Epsom Public School to design a flag for the community. All students were invited to participate. Two winners were chosen. Ian Robertson won overall flag design and Alec Cranmer was the winner for crest design. At the unveiling of the flag a representative of each class gave their interpretation of what it meant to be a citizen of Epsom School and community. "This Land is My Land"

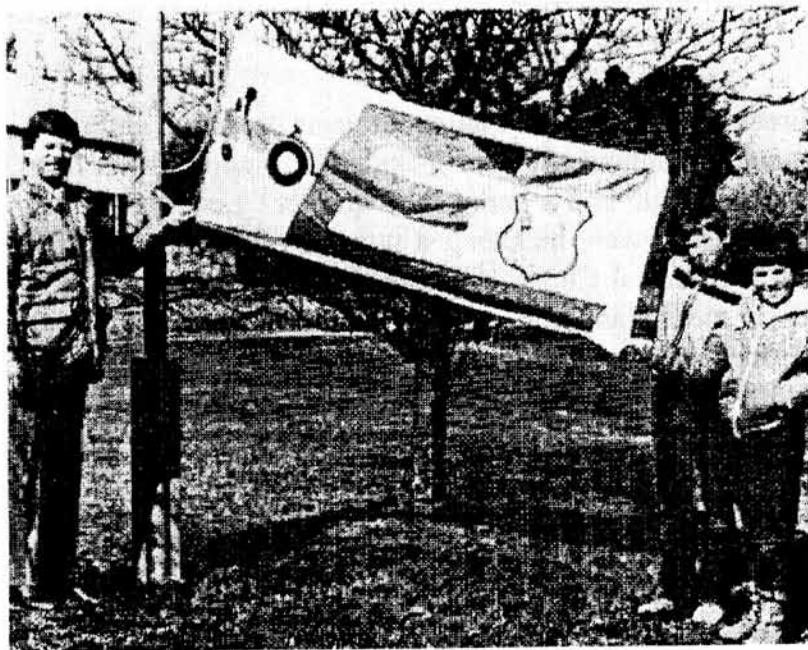


Figure 14: Epsom flag. From the Uxbridge Times Journal, 1983.

and "O Canada" were sung by guests and students and the flag was raised. The Epsom flag features a crest that consists of a book to symbolize academic work, hockey equipment for sports, a treble clef for music and a happy face. The flag also features a large "E" for Epsom and a tractor to indicate that this is an agricultural community (Fig. 14).<sup>70</sup>

Older village residents can relate many a tale about the village through the years. It was a common occurrence in the late 1930s for villagers to be serenaded by the Cook sisters and Laura Rogers, usually around midnight. Walt Rogers had a dog that was scared of thunderstorms, and he would take refuge at the Baileys' in their Ford Roadster. The Baileys' cat would retaliate by swinging on Mrs. Rogers's freshly washed bedspreads.

All of the villagers had fruit trees, excellent gardens and food was traded back and forth so that everyone enjoyed in the plenty. Many things have changed in the village of Epsom since those early settlers, Ensign and Monroe, first broke ground. However, some things have stayed the same: Jockey Hill's friendliness and spirit of community remain an integral part of the village of Epsom.

## Epsom

### A Country Village

There's a little country village, called Epsom if you will  
The people who once lived there, called it Jockey Hill  
But there a change has taken place, new faces now you'll see  
Which all seem very bright and fair, so happy and so free.  
The Blacksmith shop has closed its doors, no more the anvil  
rings  
The smithy answered to His call, and with the angels sing.  
The red school of yore is still standing there where happy chil-  
dren played,  
The master's voice so clear and sweet, none ever were afraid  
And let us not forget the church, where we sat side by side  
Our mothers, fathers, loved ones all, who long have crossed the  
tide.  
The choir too who used to sing, those good old songs of yore  
And often in our minds we wish, we could hear them as before.  
The Ladies Aid meets every month, in homes both large and  
small  
And with their good and kindly ways, and meet expenses in the  
fall.  
The parsonage too, still takes its place, on a street with trees so  
tall,  
Where boys and girls as lovers stroll, from Spring until the Fall.  
But where are the old chums, the friends we loved so well  
Some are in the church-yard, and some in the city dwell;  
When time comes round for holidays, unto the village we hie  
We pack our grips and take the train, but wish that we could fly.

— Unknown author

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