

## Governor General's Horse Guards

Canada's most senior army reserve regiment, The Governor General's Horse Guards, is marking 200 years of lineage in Markham where the storied regiment got its start in 1810 when Capt. John Button formed a troop of militia cavalry near his farm in the Buttonville area.

By the time our ancestors arrived in Markham, the second session of the first Parliament of Upper Canada had passed the Militia Act in 1793. It stipulated that all males from the age of 16 to 50 years, physically fit and residing in the province, were to be enrolled in local militia companies. Militia officers were appointed throughout the various district to command the companies which were to be mustered and inspected twice a year. Fines were imposed on all those failing to appear at a muster parade without sufficient reason.

By 1807, relations between Great Britain and the

U.S. again became strained. War appeared at least a possibility. The militia were mustered, inspected and then dismissed to be ready to reassemble on short notice should they be required. By this time Capt. John Henry Summerfelt was in command of the local militia unit. Some of the names included in dispatches were Henry Pingle, John Hagerman, Anthony Wonch, Christian Hendricks, John Fierheller, Frederick Quantz, John Stiver, John Tipp, Jacob Lunau, Simon Teal and Henry Phillips.

John Button, born in Connecticut in 1772 arrived in Markham by 1801. He purchased Lot 15, Concession 4 from John Henry Buhrmester on December 22, 1809 and April 16, 1811. This Lot was next to John George Schultz. John Button served in the 1st York Regiment of Militia as a lieutenant and in 1810 he obtained permission from the commanding officer to form a troop of dragoons within that regiment, the first cavalry unit raised in Upper Canada. Button and his dragoons were on active duty throughout the War





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Articles for the Berczy Settlers Gazette are welcome.  
Query Column: we will publish specific names you are  
trying to trace along with your name and address.

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of 1812, carrying dispatches between Fort George, York and Kingston. It is this troop of dragoons that is considered the origin of the Governor General's Horse Guards and hence the celebration of the 200th Anniversary in 2010. Ruth Burkholder has confirmed there was a sale of ¼ acre from Lot 15 that was probably land for the Buttonville Methodist Church and Cemetery located on Woodbine Avenue (4th Concession), just south of 16th Avenue. Major John Button and his son Francis are both buried in this cemetery.

A series of events in Markham will mark the 200th Celebration. On January 1, 2010 a regimental flag raising took place at the Civic Centre. A major public military event will take place at Markham Museum on June 12. October 2 will see Mayor Frank Scarpitti present the keys of the Town to the GGHG Regiment on Main Street, Markham. In addition there will be several regimental dinners in the community. Planning is underway for an event to honour the grave-site of Major John Button in Buttonville Cemetery.

## Berczy Day in Markham

December 10, 2009

**William Berczy Public School  
celebrates Berczy Day.**

William Berczy Public School in Markham hosted a school assembly to celebrate William Berczy's 265th birthday. Principal James Flynn shared the story of their namesake William Berczy and his contributions to the life and culture of Markham beginning in 1794.

William Berczy is considered the 'founding father' of Markham because he brought the first 200 settlers from Germany to settle in Markham. It is these settlers that created the community and economy that has become the vibrant Town of Markham in 2010.

## Painting comes to Fred Varley Gallery

The Fred Varley Art Gallery of Markham released information on Berczy Day that it had acquired a new addition to its collection of paintings. It is one of William Berczy's early 'oil on panel' paintings of 'Maria Theresa'. It would appear that Maria Theresa was a benefactor of one of the schools where William 'Moll' Berczy studied in Vienna. He would have done the painting in the late 1770's when he was in his mid 30's. This painting comes to the gallery through the generosity of the John Andre family in Toronto. John Andre gave birth to the interest in William 'Moll' Berczy in Canada through his research and publication of two widely distributed books: *William Berczy, Co-Founder of Toronto* (1967) and *Infant Toronto* (1971). This large framed painting (approximately 23 x 28.5 inches) will complement the Berczy miniature already within the collection.

**Maria Theresa** (13 May 1717 – 29 November 1780) was the only female ruler of the Habsburg dominions and the last of the House of Habsburg. She was the sovereign of Austria, Hungary, Croatia, Bohemia, Mantua, Milan, Lodomeria and Galicia, the Austrian Netherlands, and Parma. By marriage, she was Grand Duchess of Tuscany, Duchess of Lorraine, German Queen and Holy Roman Empress

The second but eldest surviving child of Charles VI, Holy Roman Emperor, and Elisabeth Christine of



*Maria Theresa*

Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel, Maria Theresa was born early in the morning of 13 May 1717 at the Hofburg Palace, Vienna, shortly after the death of her elder brother Leopold. The least inbred Habsburg ruler for centuries, she was christened **Maria Theresia Walburga Amalia Christina** later that day.

As a youth, Maria Theresa greatly enjoyed singing and archery. She was barred from horse riding by her father, but she would later learn the basics for the sake of her Hungarian coronation ceremony. Maria Theresa married Francis III of Lorraine on 12 February 1736. Unlike many princesses of her time she married for love.

Over the course of twenty years, Maria Theresa gave birth to sixteen children, thirteen of whom survived infancy.

Like all members of the House of Habsburg, Maria Theresa was a Roman Catholic, and a devout one as well. She believed that religious unity was necessary for a peaceful public life and explicitly rejected the idea of religious toleration. However, she never allowed the Church to interfere with what she considered to be prerogatives of a monarch and kept Rome at arm's length. She controlled the selection of archbishops, bishops and abbots. Besides her devotion to Christianity, she was widely known for her ascetic lifestyle, especially during her 15-year-long widowhood.

The empress fell ill on 24 November 1780, ostensibly of a chill. Her physician, Dr. Störk, thought her condition serious. By 28 November, she was asking for the last rites, and the next day, at about nine o'clock in the evening, she died surrounded by her remaining children.

Maria Theresa left a revitalized empire that influenced the rest of Europe throughout the 19th century. Her descendants followed her example and continued reforming the empire.

The empress is buried in the Imperial Crypt in Vienna next to her husband in a coffin she had inscribed during her lifetime.

### **From the files of the Markham Sun July 19, 1906**

The members of the Lunau family married and unmarried, rich and poor, all ages and sizes, will have a grand picnic and union gathering on the 11th of August in Mr. C. A. Lunau's flats, Buttonville. The oldest member of this historic family is Mr. William Lunau of Buttonville, who is 78 years of age and active. Many of the name have passed away but there are still over 100 that can claim descent from one of the pioneer settlers of Markham Township.

Mr. C. H. Stiver and O. Summerfeldt have been visiting in the North West and are expected home this week.

### **From the Files of the Markham Economist, Thursday, January 12, 1911**

The death of Mrs. Mauer, wife of the Rev. Jacob Mauer, Lutheran minister in Unionville took place at the Toronto General Hospital Saturday afternoon and though not unexpected, was a great shock to the community.

Mrs. Mauer came to this village with her husband and family of two sons and two daughters about three years ago on the occasion of her husband's assumption of the pastorate of the Unionville and Buttonville appointments of the Lutheran Church. Their work, for Mrs. Mauer was a true helpmate of her husband, had been most successful, and the deceased had by her unfailing kindness and courtesy won a warm spot in the hearts of everybody with whom she came in contact....

The funeral service, which was largely attended and very impressive was held in the Lutheran Church, Unionville on Tuesday at 2:30 p.m., the remains afterwards being placed on the 4:35 train and accompanied by her husband, taken to Mahone Bay, Nova Scotia, for burial in the family plot. Rev. Mr. Mauer was completely overcome by his wife's death, and the officials of the church willingly granted him six weeks' leave of absence, which he will spend at Mahone Bay. During the past year the work of tearing down and rebuilding Unionville church on a more convenient site had been undertaken and the work completed, and all arrangements had been made for the formal opening of the handsome new structure, which was to have taken place on Sunday last, but has now been postponed.

*(Editor's Note: This was the move of Bethesda Lutheran Church from the current cemetery site to 20 Union Street, Unionville. Harold Harper was the last person I knew who had helped with that move. He told me of helping clean the bricks of mortar as they tore down the old church. A folklore story is that the argument for moving into the village was that the rural people had to hitch up their horse and buggies anyway to come to church so an extra mile would not make much difference and then the Town people could walk to church. Little did they know of the coming impact of the automobile.)*

### **From Thursday, February 9, 1911**

Rev. Mr. Mauer arrived home on Saturday night, called from Nova Scotia, by the serious illness of his son, and was greatly relieved on his arrival to find him almost well again.

From S.S. #14 School (located on 14th Avenue between Concession 7 and 8)

Total Marks 441

Florence Thomson 368, Pearl Helmky 339, Minnie Raymer 309, Nellie Stiver 309, Grant Helmky 306, Velma Helmky 388, Leslie Stiver 271.

## Berczy Village Expansion

The farm surrounding the Berczy Burying Grounds (Bethesda Lutheran Cemetery) has been sold for development at a reported price of \$100 million for the 204 acres. This farm is also the site of the Eckardt House, the oldest house in Markham and possibly York Region.

Members of the Cemetery Board have already met with the development team of the new owners and the Planning Department of the Town of Markham to register our concerns about the surrounding plan of development. The Cemetery is fortunate that the previous owners, the Beckett family, have donated an additional acre to expand the cemetery. The exact location is being negotiated with the new owners.

The future of the Eckardt House is also up for negotiations. The house has been designated as a historically significant building by the Town of Markham. However, there is no clear direction as to its future use. Developers dislike heritage buildings on their property because they interfere with subdivision plans. Stay tuned for more clear directions as plans develop.

## Annual General Meeting Minutes

October 13, 2009

After a presentation to Town of Markham Council at 7 p.m. in honour of German Pioneers Day 18 members of MBSA met at Bethesda Lutheran Church. The minutes of that meeting follow.

Bob Shank welcomed 18 members and friends and provided an update on activities over the past two years.

Lorne failed to bring the minutes of the 2007 AGM. Treasurers Report. Jeff Shank reported on the financial statements. Receipts for 2008 were \$3,473 and expenses \$1,289. Members equity for 2008 was \$6,127. This included a sizable donation from Germany. Receipts for 2009 were \$698 and expenses \$2,519 and members equity \$4,306.

Webmaster report: Janet reported that the website receives 2500 hits per month. Janet continues to report on the association on her blog. Janet has explored using Facebook but the question remains unanswered. Web costs are about \$250 per year. Rolf Piro suggested that the newsletter be put up on the Internet and that we might be able to get sponsorship for this.

Lorne introduced the Guest Speaker Mr. Bob Stiver speaking on the Stiver Mill. Bob was accompanied by Mitch Sauder of David Johnston Architect Ltd. Bob led the group through a series of photos inside and outside of the mill. He described his vision of the mill as the Stiver Mill Cultural Centre to include meeting room, museum, craft rooms, etc. The cost of renovation as projected by their consultants is just over \$750,000. A very successful event this year has been the Stiver Mill Farmers Market from June to October. It brought thousands of people past the mill to purchase their fresh fruits and vegetables. They also had a presence at the Unionville Festival in June. It was a fine presentation.

The Board of Directors was reviewed. For the period 2008 to 2011 the following were elected: Victoria Munro, Keith Avann, Janet Iles and Bob Stiver. For the period 2009 to 2012 the following were elected. Lorne Smith, Norm Henricks, Eleanor Copeland. Moved by Bill van der Zande, seconded by Keith Avann that these be the directors. Carried.



Stephanie Lake Photography

Bob reported that through discussions beforehand, Janet Iles will replace him as co-chair.

Lorne reported on a number of items that were happening.

The Bicentennial of the War of 1812 will become a featured event in Ontario and Canada in three years time. A part of this for Markham will be Major John Button's troops. Button (Buttonville) is buried at the Buttonville Cemetery. Lorne is proposing that the gravestones of all members of that early militia be honoured with a plaque.

Membership is dropping from a high of over 700 in 1974 to approximately 250. However the Internet is a major source of information for family research.

The Governor General's Horse Guard Military troop take their founding from Button's Dragoons. There will be major celebrations around Markham next year as they celebrate their 200th Anniversary.

Discussions followed on a number of items about the future of MBSA

- The need to keep the newsletters going
- Putting up the newsletters on the website
- Possible bus trip to Pennsylvania
- Another effort at Research Days in the community.

The meeting adjourned to cheese and fruit and cookies, tea and coffee by Carol Smith

## German Pioneers Day

October 13, 2009

*Text of presentation by Lorne Smith*

Mayor Scarpitti, Deputy Mayor Jack Heath, Regional Councillors, Ward Councillors.

I wish to thank the Town of Markham Council for Proclaiming German Pioneers Day on this the day

after Thanksgiving in accordance with the Provincial Legislation passed on June 23, 2000. Ontario became the very first province to officially recognize the historic and ongoing contribution to our society of Canadians of German Ancestry.

I had the pleasure of participating in the celebration at noon today in front of the Legislature at Queens Park, Toronto. The Honourable John Milloy, Minister of Training, colleges and universities chaired the event.

Gathered here today are a group of people who are members of Markham organizations who work to research, record and promote the contribution of those earliest German pioneers who created the foundations of this prosperous community.

Markham Berczy Settlers Association: Bob Shank, President.

York Chapter, Pennsylvania German Folklore Society of Ontario: Don Miller, President.

Reesor Family in Canada: President Betty Burkholder.

Markham Historical Society: Ray Fugeman, President

The Historical Society of Mecklenburg Upper Canada: Christian Klein.

And we have people like Gerhard Schickedanz and Heinz Nitske who came to our community following WWII and have continued the traditions of hard work and entrepreneurial spirit to become successful business people in our community.

We, as a group, are very proud of our German heritage and are conscious of the hardships suffered by those early ancestor families who arrived here in 1794 and early 1800s to a fertile land that was covered



Stephanie Lake Photography



in forests. They saw the potential and worked hard to build their homes, establish their farms and businesses, established their places of worship, their schools, and community services.

It is of interest that the original 64 families of Berczy Settlers under the leadership of William Berczy, arrived just before Christmas 215 years ago. It is from this settler group that we get family names like Hagerman, Eckardt, Stiver, Schmidt, Helmke, Lunau, Quantz, Pingel, We know the Reesor family arrived in York in the third week in October 205 years ago. They were part of a group of 67 families that came from Pennsylvania by Conestoga wagon between 1803 and 1812. From this group we get the family names of Brillinger, Byer, Burkholder, Hoover, Reesor, Wideman, Wismer, Barkey, Grove, and Miller.

We, collectively, appreciate that the Town of Markham give us this opportunity to recognize our ancestors. The Bicentennial Monument here at the Civic Centre serves as a permanent testimonial to those early settler families. Each of our organizations takes every opportunity to tell our ancestors' stories in parades and festivals in Markham. We record and publish books and newsletters of our stories. We are all strong supporters of the Markham Museum.

These organizations remain very active. For example:

The Reesor Family in Canada will be hosting its next reunion on June 25, 26, 27 in 2010.

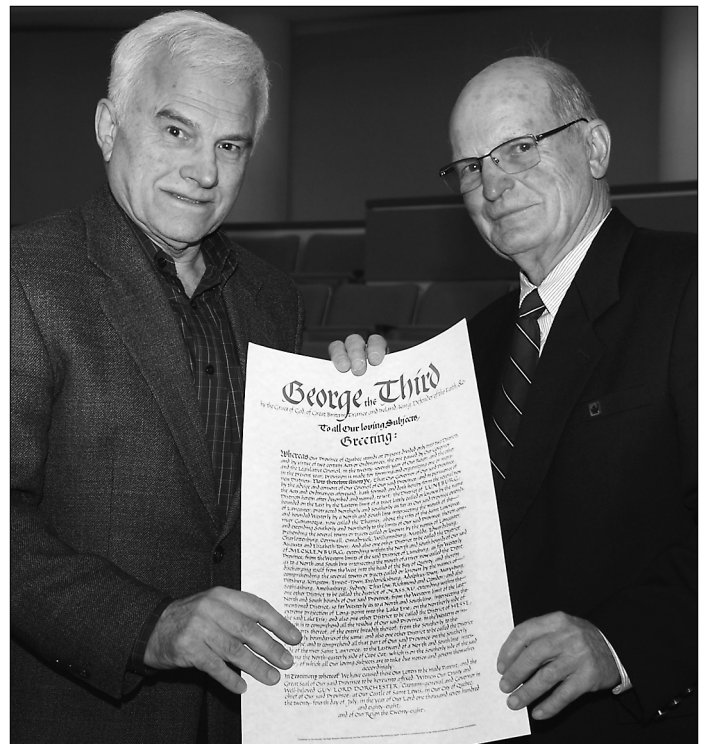
The Markham Berczy Settlers Association is hosting its AGM tonight after this meeting.

The Markham Historical Society holds its regular meetings at the Museum.

The York Chapter, Pennsylvania German Folklore Society holds its Annual General Meeting in Victoria Square. A highlight of its yearly events is a Sausage and Sauerkraut Supper at Rouge Valley Mennonite Church on Reesor Road in November. It is always a sell-out. It also does a major demonstration of traditional sausage and sauerkraut making at Black Creek Pioneer Festival each September. Members made and sold about 1300 pounds of Sausage this year. The PGFSO is publishing its 19th Volume of Canadian German Folklore Series this fall.

We feel these activities are essential tasks of our organizations given the cultural change in our population. We embrace these newcomers to our community and hope they will adopt the societal values of our ancestors: honesty, hard work, strength of family, help your neighbour, support our community, and have a strong faith in a higher power. We take every opportunity to share our stories with them.

And of course we cannot forget our close ties with Nöerdlingen, Germany through our cultural partnership. Markham is probably the only town in



*Cristian Klein and Lorne Smith Stephanie Lake Photography*

Canada that can trace its earliest settler, William Berczy, to a partnership community in another country.

Again, thank you for honouring our ancestors and their contribution to the Town of Markham.

Cristian Klein, President of The Historical Society of Mecklenburg Upper Canada presented Lorne Smith with a copy of the proclamation of George the Third when he established the Districts of Lunenburg, Mecklenburg, Nassau, and Hess in Upper Canada on the 24th day of July, 1788.

## **New Collections building at Markham Museum**

Construction is well underway on the new three story 16,000 square foot Collections building at Markham Museum. This will contain space to house most of the artifacts currently in storage at the Museum. It will also include a large archival storage area in the lower floor with a pleasant reading room. We remain hopeful that this reading room can be named the Berczy Room.



*New Collections building*



*Aksel Rinck, S. D. Erbprinz Carl-Eugene of Oettingen-Wallerstein, Carol Smith, Bürgermeister Joseph Mayer and Lorne Smith*

## Visit to Nöerdlingen, Germany

Your editor and wife Carol had the opportunity to spend a few days in Nöerdlingen and Wallerstein, Germany in November. We had enjoyed at boat cruise on the Danube and before returning we took the train from Frankfurt to Nöerdlingen. What a great train system in Germany.

We met with Oberbürgermeister Hermann Faul, Bürgermeister Joseph Mayer, Aksel Rinck, and retired



*Aksel Rinck and Holger Raasch*

Oberbürgermeister Paul Kling. We even had a tour of Furst Wallerstein Brauhaus.

We enjoyed a wonderful time with Aksel Rinck who co-ordinated our visits and shared stories with us.

An article on page 6 of the Summer 2009 *Berczy Settlers Gazette* described the Heritage Award given to Aksel Rinck by the German Canadian Congress on May 26, 2009. Aksel was recognized for his efforts in creating an awareness of the contribution of William 'Moll' Berczy and the Berczy Settlers in Canada and in initiating the cultural partnership between Markham and Nöerdlingen. The problem of getting the award to Aksel was solved thanks to the German Consul General, located in Toronto, who promised to deliver the award in person to Aksel. On October 22, Holger Raasch, now retired Consul General, presented the awards to Aksel in the Nöerdlingen Rathaus (City Hall) with many City officials and friends present. It was a wonderful Birthday present for Aksel.

## Non Summer of 1816

On April 10th 1815, Mount Tambora in Indonesia erupted and killed 10,000 people from the explosion and another 82,000 people from related causes such as starvation and disease. To date, Tambora is the world's worst volcano disaster in recorded history. The mountain, which stood at 13,000 feet tall, was reduced by 4,000 feet and spewed 93 cubic miles of ash into the atmosphere.

Why there was no Summer in 1816.

Because the explosion of Mount Tambora was very intense, the ash cloud reached the earth's stratosphere which enabled it to be carried to other parts of the world. Because it takes time for the ash to circulate, it didn't drastically affect weather patterns in distant places, such as the Northern Hemisphere, until 1816. The dust in the atmosphere caused less sunlight to pass through, thus causing unseasonably cold temperatures.

Between May and September southern Ontario and Quebec were affected by a series of cold waves which killed crop and led to near famine conditions in some parts. During one such cold spell between June 6th and 10th 30-36cms snow lay on the ground in Quebec City. Meanwhile on June 6th and 8th it snowed in Montreal (Neil Davids 1976). Sub-zero temperatures during June blackened crops and froze ponds killing wildfowl.

Some mornings in July and August were decidedly chilly and probably frosty, whilst hard frosts on 11th, 12th and 27th September ended the already shortened growing season.

In New England, there was snow in early June. During the months of July, August and September, night time temperatures dipped and frost occurred on

several occasions. July and August were dry so the crops started to suffer from drought. Frost in September caused additional crop failure. The lack of sunlight stunted plant growth and prevented the ripening of produce such as corn.

There were also effects in Europe. Away from Britain, there were food riots in France and Switzerland and at least 200,000 died from hunger and a typhus epidemic in Europe whilst in Germany there was a sharp peak in rye prices in 1816 and 1817 and around Europe wheat prices also rose at that time. Meanwhile, near Iceland sea ice persisted into June. The unusual weather patterns of the summer of 1816 have also been blamed for causing or adding to the severity of a number of plagues and epidemics, including the 1816-1819 European typhus epidemic which was among the severest ever, a plague which affected south-eastern Europe and the Mediterranean between 1816 and 1819 (Lamb 1995).

*(Editor's note: Do any of our members have any information or family folklore about this summer of 1816?)*

## Toronto's Old Town Landmarks

need to be preserved - but don't forget William  
Berczy the Co-Founder of this great City

*Rolf A. Piro*

Toronto must tell its people and the tourists how important and wonderful our history is. Much of the City's early historic heritage has largely been paved over or has been bricked up, and very disturbing is its "missing eighteen months history" and heritage from the history books that deals with the dramatic birth of this great city. To avoid embarrassing corrections in future travel guides, historians will be challenged to complete this blank.

The "missing eighteen months" history deals in greater part with the considerable work that had been done by the City's co-founder William Berczy for Governor Graves Simcoe during the early times from 1793 to 1795 with the constructions of roads and buildings. After the arrival of one hundred Queen's Rangers from Queenston to Toronto on the 20th July 1793, when they came to penetrate the primeval forest, Berczy brought all

his tools and gear works to build a grist mill and saw mill, thus helping new settlers to succeed with a better life. Virtually nothing is known about William Berczy's oxen and cattle that had been destined to clear the tree stumps on what is now King Street - and extending it to the Don River. This husbandry had been on its way from Connecticut in 1793 and was due to arrive with his group of Berczy's settlers.

The catalyst for the work during the 'missing eighteen months' history and heritage has been the William Berczy warehouse of the German Land Company. This warehouse served to accommodate the oxen and had also been employed for the construction of Yonge Street. It also served for the supply and storage of construction material for the early houses in Old Town. The warehouse was located within the official ten-block town site community of Old Town on the south east corner of Sherbourne and King Street, not being as lucky as some 19th century buildings that survived.

The City has hired two consultants to conduct a lighting study and a study which is helping to create a heritage interpretation master plan that will tell the story of Old Town. It must capture the feel of a place - for you to live your myth in Toronto. Come to Old Town where it all began. Experience the historic walk from St. Lawrence Hall, King St. to Don River via the Distillery District with an appreciation for the architecture but don't forget the heritage of Toronto's co-founder. This history must come to life and is to be shared by all.

## Jacob Stiver House, Lot 20, Con. 5

The Jacob Stiver farm on the south side of Major Mackenzie is under full residential development. *Markham Remembered* by Mary B. Champion, contains a great photo on page 55, of the old stone house. The original house has been expanded since 1950 but will be retained within the development. The small house at the end of the laneway is still on its original site and is also to be maintained within the development.

