

Caledon's first settlement to mark 200th anniversary on Sept. 14

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Historians in Caledon should be happy to note that September marks the 200th anniversary of settlement in Caledon, when the area was first surveyed in 1819.

Although the first ticket would not be sold until October, settlement began in earnest in the town of what was then named Market Hill, and today we know as Mono Mills.

Next Saturday September 14, the Town and the local historical society are putting on a celebration at Victoria Community Centre from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. There will be fireworks, guided walking tours, food, music, community and historical displays, a dog show, and the unveiling of an historical plaque and monument. The Fire Department with Sparky the Firedog will also be making an appearance, along with the library, and Meals on Wheels. Pizza, BBQ, and pies will be served, along with a café featuring tea, coffee, banana bread, and other snacks.

Located at the northern end of Caledon, the original settlement was populated by Pennsylvania Dutch following the Black Walnut Tree (a sign of good luck and indication of good farmland in The Netherlands) and United Empire Loyalists. By 1824, Irish settlers had arrived, and the mills were created, for which the town was renamed.

Not just a mill and farming town, then far larger than neighbouring Orangeville, Mono Mills was actually an extremely important stop for travellers going between Toronto and Georgian Bay, "an important transportation corridor for movement of commercial goods and military units", according to the event's pamphlet.

The town then had five hotels, several taverns, two blacksmith's shops, a post office, a tannery, and a butcher to cater to the needs of those on the road. Accommodation was provided "for man and beast" as the contemporary accounts state.

Being near the Humber River also allowed for the development of four local mills, manufacturing flour and wool to the surrounding area.

"Few current residents of Mono Mills would be able to recognize their village during the mid-19th century", reads the historical pamphlet. "The modern Highway 9 runs through much of the old village, whereas during the 19th century the main east-west corridor was called King Street, but today Mono Mills Crescent is modestly hidden behind Tim Hortons and the gas stations."

Both churches, St. John's Anglican and Mono Mills United (originally a drill shed) were both constructed in the later half of the 1860s, but remain standing to this day.

By 1865, Mono Mills was "a settlement of roughly 350 people, with the vast majority being Irish Protestant settlers. As a result many of the early inhabitants were members of the pro-British and Protestant Orange Order."

This led to many conflicts with neighbouring Roman Catholics, which helped with the eventual decline of the settlement, with many settlers choosing to move away from the conflict to Orangeville.

Other factors contributing to the town's fall into obscurity was the decision to build the railways through Orangeville in 1871, citing high land prices and street brawling for bypassing Mono Mills. Following this, "a disastrous fire in 1893 solidified the decline of the village. It is not unreasonable to believe that the village could have developed as the prominent settlement along today's Highway 9 instead of Orangeville, if the railway had been run through Mono Mills."

The Bicentennial Celebration offers the Caledon community a chance to explore its historical roots and "search for a renewed sense

of community spirit?we can find some inspiration in the rough and tumble origins of our village,? the pamphlet concludes. Come out on September 14th for food and fun, as well as honouring the history in our own backyard.

A full schedule of the day's events are as follows:

4 p.m. to 4:20 p.m. Sandhill Pipes and Drums to open the day and perform a show.

5 p.m. Mayor Allan Thompson and Caledon Council to be 'piped in'.

5:05 p.m. Town Crier and proclamation

5:10 p.m. Mayor Thompson's address, including comments from MPP Sylvia Jones and MP David Tilson

5:15 p.m. Unveiling the plaque and historic rock

5:20 p.m. Reading of the plaque.

5:25 p.m. Photo op with all dignitaries, Councillors attending, working group and community members.

5:30 p.m. Dog show.

6 p.m. Guided walking tours.

8 p.m. Firework show.