

## Introduction

Welcome to *The Archaeology of Five Queensville Farmsteads – a 19th Century Crossroads Community in the Township of East Gwillimbury, Ontario*.

The Children of Peace were a break-away sect of Quakers who settled in Sharon, Ontario. “With a goal of establishing a utopian, non-sectarian community, the Children of Peace devoted themselves to self-sufficiency, fair-dealing and democratic equality.” (Canada’s Historic Places, 2007). The sect was led by the charismatic David Willson who built the Sharon Temple between 1825 and 1832. The temple is a unique architectural structure in Canada and is now a National Historic Site which is open to public visitation and operated by the Friends of the Temple.

The temple was a timber-frame building constructed on a stone foundation. It was an imposing building which measured 60 by 60 feet and combined elements of Christian and Jewish faiths. “The Children of Peace used the temple 15 times a year—12 times for regular monthly offerings and three times for special high holidays.” (Canada’s Historic Places, 2007). The sect actively supported democratic reforms of the government and some members joined the Upper Canada Rebellion led by William Lyon Mackenzie. They then helped elect Robert Baldwin and Louis LaFontaine who were reformers for the Responsible Government movement in 1837. The Children of Peace

created the first farmers’ co-op, the first credit union, and the first homeless shelter in Canada.

The temple was constructed by master builder Ebenezer Doan, who was assisted by other highly skilled craftsmen including Rueben Burr, a joiner who was responsible for the timber framework of the temple.

David Willson lived in Sharon and the temple was built on his property. Ebenezer Doan lived on Concession 3 just north of Sharon. Rueben Burr lived on Lot 17, Concession 2, on the southern edge of Queensville. Burr purchased the southern half of Lot 18 in 1825 and sold it to Ebenezer Doan in 1832, who sold it to his son, Ira, in 1834. While the temple was located in Sharon, there were other ties to Queensville. Lot 16 was originally settled by William Willson, a cousin of David Willson, the leader of the Children of Peace. William and his wife Sarah were active members of the Children of Peace.

Since 2007, my company, This Land Archaeology Inc., has undertaken more than a dozen archaeological assessments for DG Group on lands owned by Queensville Properties Development Corporation. This has involved a Stage 1 archaeological assessment of all lands owned by the corporation and Stage 2 assessments of most of their lands located west of Leslie Street and one parcel located east of this street.

These assessments discovered five 19th century farmstead sites, four located on adjacent lots on the west side of Leslie Street (Lots 16 through 19, Concession 2) and

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one adjacent (Lot 17, Concession 3) to these on the east side. These sites have been called Queensville Site 1, Queensville Site 2, Queensville Site 3, Queensville Doan, and Queensville Milne. Stage 3 test excavations of these sites began in 2008 and the Stage 4 excavations at the Milne site were completed in the fall of 2017.

The archaeological investigation of five 19th century sites in such close proximity to each other by one archaeological consulting firm presented us with a unique opportunity to produce a published account of their excavation. This included a description of the architectural features preserved in the soil, the artifacts contained in them, and the interpretation of the results of our excavations to allow a better appreciation of the results of our work in helping to understand the occupation of Queensville in the 19th century.

Queensville Site 1 was originally occupied by Rueben Burr, one of the master builders of the Sharon Temple. He originally built a small house on the property, and later, a more substantial home with a large stone-walled basement and a sizable outbuilding attached to the house. It appears that both houses continued to be occupied while Burr lived on the property. I suggested that this was the result of Burr housing apprentices who worked on the temple under his direction and training. Burr sold his property to Dr. Edward Morton in 1838. Morton was one of the farmers who had grain threshed by Ezra Doan and in return helped Doan thresh his grain.

Queensville Site 2 was located east of Leslie Street. Our excavations exposed the cellar of the original house and the second-generation house with a stone-walled cellar and an attached outbuilding with a stone foundation. In 1871, the property was owned by Peter Crann. Crann had his grain threshed by Ezra Doan as well, and in turn helped Doan thresh his grain.

Queensville Site 3 was settled by William H. Willson, a cousin of David Willson, founder of the Children of Peace, in 1843. Willson lived on the property until 1870 when he sold it to Henry Mosier.

Queensville Doan was purchased from Rueben Burr by Ebenezer Doan in 1832 at the time of the completion of the Sharon Temple. Ebenezer sold it to his son, Ira, who lived there until his death in 1871. Ira farmed the land with his son, Ezra, who acquired a 10-acre parcel at the northeast corner of the lot. Ezra and his father operated the farm on shares. Our excavations at this site revealed the cellar of the first house built on the property and a midden, along with one privy which uncovered large numbers of complete or almost complete dishes. It was Ezra who kept a diary in 1871 which provided us with a glimpse of life in Queensville in that year.

At Queensville Milne, we discovered the cellar of the first house occupied by Rueben Richardson in 1802. Our excavations here produced more than 60,000 artifacts featuring a full array of the artifacts in use at this property in the 19th century.

In summary, the preparation and distribution of this publication is twofold. One, it is intended to provide some value-added to DG Group and Queensville Properties Development Corporation for their due diligence, along with the trust they put in This Land Archaeology Inc. to help uncover and protect Ontario's fascinating history. All too often the reports on our excavations are filed with the client and the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport with no effort to disseminate the results to the members of the local community and the people of the province. As was the case with my book on Patterson Village in the Township of Vaughan, this publication, Volume 2 in the Our Lands Speak series, represents my ongoing efforts to share the fascinating findings of the archaeological assessments of my company to a wider audience. Revisiting the license reports prepared over the past 10 years and re-examining the artifacts from some of the sites including reconstructing some of the artifacts preserved in an undisturbed midden and an unusually rich privy at the Doan site has been a very rewarding experience.

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