

PROMINENT FAMILIES OF THE PERIOD

ZACCHEUS AND ASA BURNHAM JR.

Zaccheus and Asa Burnham Jr. served their local community well and laid the foundation for its political prominence.



Zaccheus Burnham

THE HONOURABLE ZACCHEUS BURNHAM 1777-1857

WHO HE WAS:

Zaccheus Burnham and his brother Asa, were among the first settlers in the Cobourg area, arriving in 1798 after the arduous journey from New Hampshire through the Mohawk Valley. Together they bought up large amounts of land north of Elgin Street at Burnham Street, where they founded the village of Amherst that for many years was the area's most important settlement. Here the first court house was built, and it was largely through the influence of the Burnhams that **Cobourg was chosen as the county seat**. That decision had a profound impact on the history and development of the area.

In 1801 he married his first cousin Elizabeth Choate (1780-1863). His one son Mark was educated at Oxford, England and later was rector at Peterborough. Of his four daughters three married prominent local men.

Zaccheus was a shrewd businessman and farmer. Arriving with less than \$100, by his death in 1857 he had amassed a fortune approaching \$1,000,000. The Burnham farm was one of the first commercial farms in the district.

WHAT HE DID HERE:

With his considerable landholdings Zaccheus Burnham was actively involved in the development of the area's transportation systems. He was Road Commissioner for the Newcastle District and active in the development of **the Cobourg Harbour and the Cobourg and Peterborough Railway**. He petitioned for regular ferry service on Rice Lake as early as 1833. He also invested in the steamship *Cobourg* and was appointed to the Board of Commissioners to establish the Trent Canal.

A Justice of the Peace, he was first elected to the Legislative Assembly in 1831 and then appointed to the Legislative Council in 1839. He also held the office of Judge of the District Court for the Newcastle District and was its treasurer.