



Michael Reesor of Vaughan Town, descendant of two pioneer families of this area, one of 23 harnessmakers in Canada, is seen at

work above in the saddlery at Black Creek Pioneer Village.

Young Artisan Bridges 150 Years Of History

By MARGARET GOVAN
The harness shop and saddlery at Black Creek Pioneer Village is a very pleasant place to visit. It smells nice: a combination of wax and leather. Everything is neat and orderly and business like. The saddler or "journeyman harness maker" is young and welcomes you with a smile. His name is Michael Reesor, and his mother was a Baker, daughter of Isaac Baker who is also a harness maker and outstanding in his trade, making harness for race horses.

It was from him that Michael learned the craft, doing it in the old way, all hand-work, and the sewing done with an awl. It was work which Michael found most satisfying. There is pride of work well done, a feeling of relationship with ancestors who have lived here for more than 150 years, and a craft which is connected with farming and animals and real life.

LANGSTAFF STUDENT
That doesn't mean that Michael is not part of this modern world. He attended Langstaff Secondary School, sang in the choir, played the cello, and is trying his hand at writing.

"This work gives me time to think; there are no pressures." It may give him time to think but he also accom-

plishes a good deal of work in the leather line. A complete harness is hung from the rafters. Time to make that was three weeks, with constant interruptions for he is there as an "Interpreter" of pioneer life, and has to meet the public whenever the public enters his shop.

While I was there a group of senior citizens, out on a spree, arrived. "You could get your belt loosened here," somebody remarked, and they all left chuckling.

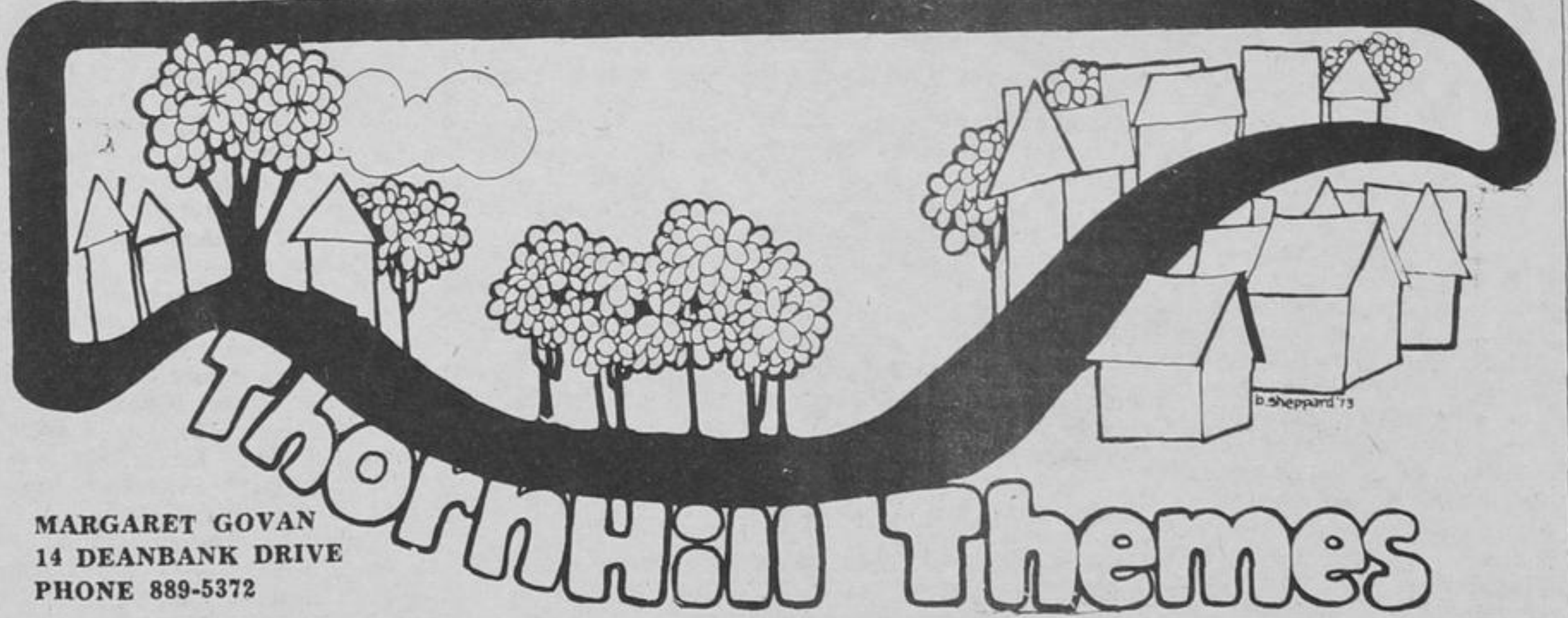
"I've done odder things than that," said Michael. "Camera case straps, purse handles, belts and shoes. I don't like shoes because it always seems to be heels, and I don't know what to do with them."

ONE OF 23
We talked about harness making. "I've been through the government census report. There are only 23 of them listed in all of Canada. I take orders for harness."

I showed my ignorance by asking about harness for oxen. "They don't wear it, just the wooden yoke with attachments."

"You live in two worlds, a century apart," I suggested. "Is it difficult to move from one to the other?"

But Michael doesn't seem to find it so. Perhaps those times when after measuring the cutting, he is free to go ahead and sew and think, bridge the transition.



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There will be a very special story hour August 21, at 1:30 at the Thornhill Public Library. It will take the form of a puppet show: the "Adventures of Binky and Doinkel". Hope you'll be there.

Residents of Thornhill will get an opportunity to learn about the Region of York's Official Plan when the "Region Plan Caravan" is located at the Farmers' Market for two days in mid-September. The dates are September 13 and 14 and the hours from 10 am to 10 pm. Qualified planning department personnel from the region will be constantly in attendance to

provide information, brochures and to answer questions.

Have you caught up with a new book called "The Watership Downs" by Richard Adams yet? I hadn't until I saw the front page of a Saturday edition of the Globe and Mail, entertainment section, devoted to it. It is truly an amazing book for people of all ages. Curiously enough it is a story about rabbits, and any youngster would enjoy it for the simple tale of all the adventures that the rabbits had, although it is long. But for adults it is a different matter. So many of our

present day customs and attitudes enter into it in a critical sense through the exciting plot of the story. It really is a remarkable comment on our times. The library in Thornhill has quite a number of copies, it is so much in demand.

Edward Seager

Another link with Thornhill history has been broken. Edward Seager died at the end of July at the age of 87. He was a farmer as had been his ancestors, and his farm was on Highway 7 about one

mile from Yonge Street. He had never married but he left a number of very sorrowful nephews and nieces. Their uncle had been the backbone of the family. He has one sister, still living, Miss Minnie Seager who lives on Centre Street. In recent years Mrs. Jack Harrison of John Street, had looked after Mr. Seager.

Mr. Seager had attended the Thornhill Public School on Elizabeth Street. It was in 1832 when riding on Yonge St. that Mr. and Mrs. Richard Gapper as Mary Gapper O'Brien relates in her journal, met two

JOHN HARRISON
Last June John (Jack) Harrison died. He left his wife, his eldest son, William, of Bayridges, his eldest daughter, Mary June Veracke, who lives in Burford, and George who is in the Navy stationed at Halifax. The rest of the children are at home: Paul, Michael, Wayne and Lynn. Mr. Harrison had been overseas during the last war, with the R.C.O.C. He worked at Thornhill Secondary School as a custodian and was a great favorite with both students and staff.

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