

ONTARIO

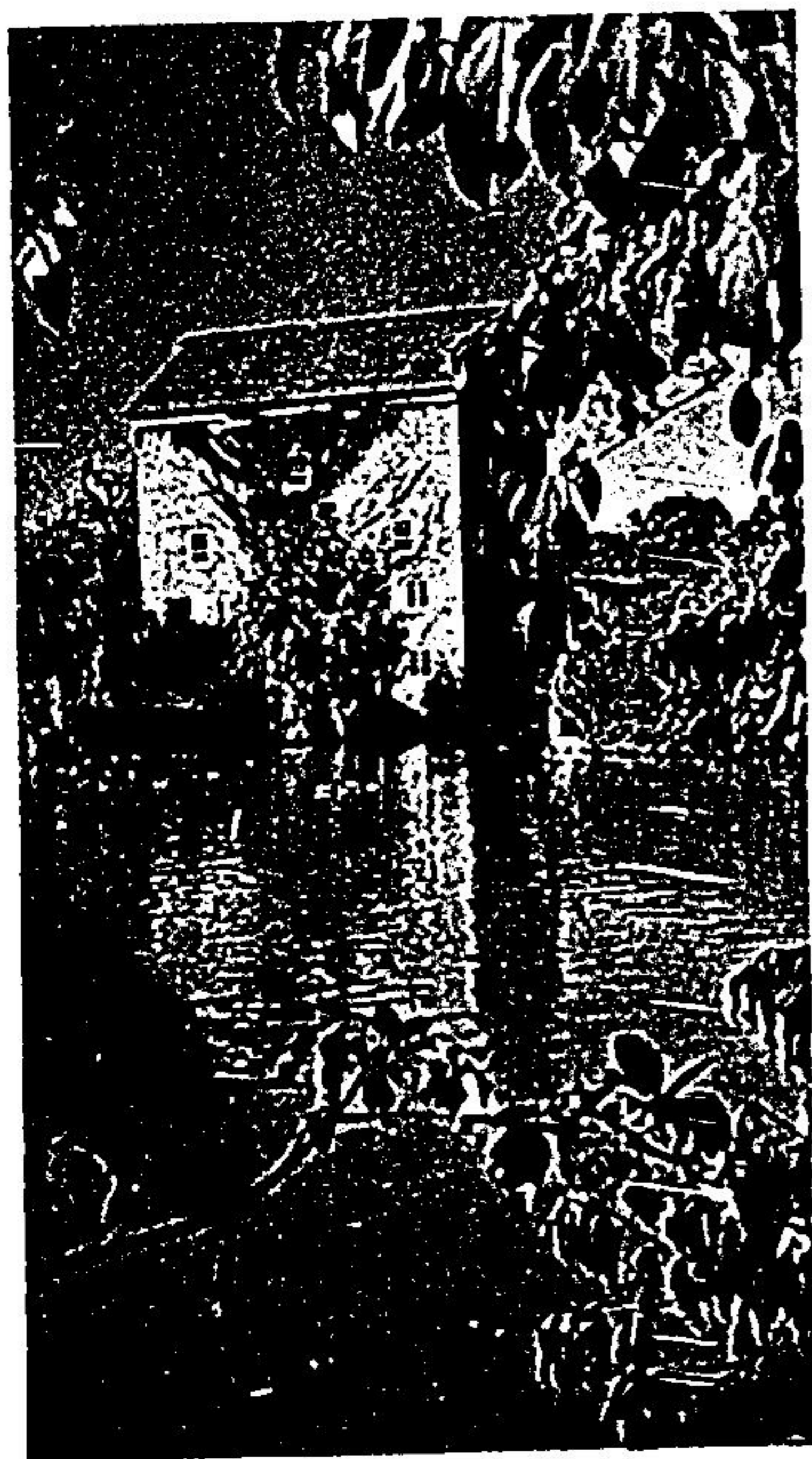


Metro's pioneer village!

by Cheryl Freedman

Drive 29 kilometres (18 miles) northwest from Toronto City Hall and slip 100 years into the past before downtown skyscrapers and bumper-to-bumper traffic. It is the world of Black Creek Pioneer Village a living museum of rural life in southern Ontario during the 75 years before Canadian Confederation (1867).

Here, history is more than a collection of old buildings and artifacts. It's homespun-clad villagers performing the daily tasks of a 19th century crossroads farm community. You stroll into the past along the wooden sidewalks of Queen Street, past the boom town facade of the Laskay Emporium and Post Office. The Emporium is crammed with foodstuffs, tools, patent medicines, hardware, china, glass, and what must be the largest meat cleaver in the world. You can buy horehound candies or old-fashioned creamy fudge out of heavy square glass candy jars.



Across the street is the Daniel Stong farm on its original site. The six buildings and their furnishings reflect the thrift of a Pennsylvania German who arrived in Canada as a child in 1800. His first home, built in 1816, is a crudely-furnished, three-room hewn-timber cabin with only an open fireplace for cooking and heating. To this he added a smoke house, piggery and chicken house, and grain barn. In 1832, he built a two-storey, seven-room house with an indoor brick bake oven in the



kitchen. This house, second-largest in the village, boasts curtains, rugs and fine furniture, including a box stove imported from Scotland.

If you're lucky, you may be offered a piece of spice cake baked in a 'five-second' oven. The 'five-seconds' refers to the length of time a pioneer woman could hold her hand in the hardwood-heated oven to ensure that it was hot enough for baking cake. The smell of baking bread draws you back across the street to the Halfway House Inn, a former stagecoach stop. Upstairs, servants and guests go about their daily business—baking, cleaning, playing cards. Downstairs, is the licensed dining room where serving girls, dressed in homespun, will bring you a full-course meal or a light snack on old-style crockery. Or, if you'd rather, you can picnic.

Up Mill Road is the one-room schoolhouse, with its cast-iron stove in the back and its dunce cap at the front. Further along can be heard the splashing of the water wheel as it moves the grindstones of Roblin's Mill, where grain is still ground today to produce the flour used in Village baking. A former Temperance Hall now houses the Printing Office and Weaver's Shop at the corner of Mill Road and Maple Avenue. In the Printing Office are the presses that were used to print weekly newspapers for many small Ontario communities. Two of the presses are still used today to turn out notices and posters. In back, the Weaver's Shop is filled with the soft hums and clicks of spinning wheel and weaving loom, producing carpets and coverlets for the village.

Although the village is open seven days a week, there are special weekend events reminiscent of farm activities of the last century. In April, these centre around building, with rail-splitting, squaring logs, shingle-making and broom-making. May is devoted to sheep shearing and spinning, to harrowing and seeding and gunsmithing. In June, you can see how our ancestors used to cook and bake before the time of Confederation. The village smithy is featured in July activities and the Printing Office in August. September is the time for putting up and preserving and for dyeing wool. October and November feature demonstra-

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