

**Mill condos**

**History coming full circle**

By BRUCE ETHERIDGE

When the official ground-breaking ceremony for the Markham Mill Condominium takes place in June those taking part will be digging into Markham history.

The old mill was Markham's first industrial site when a grist mill was built more than 180 years ago. Long before that, the area was an Indian burial ground.

And according to local historian John Lunau, a wheat cereal was made at the mill that "could have been every bit as popular as Shredded Wheat."

Mr. Lunau said the original owner of the land sold a portion of it to the first millwright that came to Markham Village. The millwright, Nicholas Miller, built a grist mill by the Rouge River in 1806 and settlers came from miles around to have flour made.

Peter Milne bought the mill in 1819 and expanded the operation to a grist, flour and woollen mill. He also established Markham's first store, a building constructed out of logs.

Under the ownership of the Milne family, which spanned three generations, a large dam was built creating Milne's pond.

Initially, the level of the pond was raised above what is now Hwy 7, flooding land nearby to the village of Unionville. The level was dropped after local farmers brought lawsuits against the Milnes' because of flooded pastureland.

The Milne family also had the first brick home built in Markham. The clay used in making the bricks was taken from their own fields and baked in an on-site kiln.

Peter Milne's three grandsons manufactured a wheat cereal that was shipped out of Markham Railway Station "by the ton", Mr. Lunau said. But the family failed to follow through with the venture.

The mill was also the site of the first apple orchard in the area. Mr. Lunau said one apple tree by the old Milne house was more than 100 years old and had a girth of three feet.

The original grist mill built by Nicholas Miller became Markham's first source of hydroelectric power in 1889, supplying the village with arc lighting.

In 1911 Archie Milne had a cement dam built — then said to be the first of its kind in North America — in an attempt to contain a body of water powerful enough to drive dynamos that would supply the entire village with electricity.

But shortly thereafter, Ontario Hydro came up Hwy 48, dousing the lights on Archie Milne's dream.

A fine collection of Indian artifacts were also found around the mill and loaned by the Milne family to the University of Toronto. But the relics were lost in a fire which gutted the university in 1890.

The last mill on the site burned down in 1935, ending an era in Markham history.

**Potluck supper**

The York Region Chapter of the Friends of Schizophrenics will hold a potluck supper Wednesday May 20 at 7:30 p.m. in the Old Town Hall, Newmarket.

Everyone is welcome. For more information call 1-800-263-2018.

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