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Community Mennonite Voices

**Unveiling of Peace Plaque
Recalls History of Stouffville's
Earliest Settlers**

Contributed by - Arnold Neufeldt-Fast



Something of historic significance is happening, said the Mayor, as a crowd of some 150 residents of various backgrounds and ages gathered at the Gazebo on Main Street in downtown Stouffville on Sunday, Sept. 22, for the unveiling of the Stouffville Peace Plaque. Like the peace dove atop our town crest, this new plaque recalls the peace identity of those earliest local settlers, who were pioneers of Canadian conscientious objection to war.

Groups of Mennonites, Brethren in Christ (Tunkers), and Quakers arrived from the U.S.A. early in the 1800s—each defined by their refusal to take up arms to shed human blood. In no other place in Upper Canada did these three "historic peace churches" settle in such close proximity, and together they formed the majority population. Lt. Gov. John Graves Simcoe wanted these groups to open and settle the land, and with the Militia Act of 1795, he offered them exemption from militia service as an incentive to come.

What shaped these "odd" people? A foundational category for Mennonites was the simple Jesus-teaching, "Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, [confidently] turn to him the other also." For Mennonites, to abandon this teaching would be to abandon the one who teaches it. They chose instead to be heavily taxed, especially during the War of 1812, many locals were fined for refusing to hand over their wagons for the war effort, and at least one imprisoned.

Their parents and grandparents had faced similar struggles regarding conflict and war. Abraham Stouffer's grandfather and his parents were likely amongst those Mennonites whose property was confiscated and then expelled from Switzerland in 1710. The Canton of Bern had been threatened by the aggressive expansionist campaigns of Louis XIV, King of France. The outright refusal to bear arms was the predominant reason given by Swiss authorities for this expulsion of their own people.

These Mennonites arrived in the Quaker-governed American colony of Pennsylvania, where citizens had the right to "refuse to bear arms." During the American Revolution, when the only option seemed to be "tyranny" (under King George!) or liberty, Mennonites (the generation of Abraham Stouffer's parents) together with Tunkers brought a joint petition to the Quaker dominated Pennsylvania Assembly. It is "our principle to feed the hungry and to give the thirsty drink, we have dedicated ourselves to serve all men in everything that can be helpful to the preservation of men's lives, but we find no freedom in giving, or doing, or assisting in anything by which men's lives are destroyed or hurt."

These were the recent identity-shaping memories with which our town's earliest-settlers arrived.

This peace-church tradition is not just inspiring for our own faith community. Long ago it laid the foundation for new local "traditions" of doing justice, bringing reconciliation, and practicing non-resistance even in the face of violence and warfare. To uncover that history in 2013, and to celebrate the first annual Stouffville Peace Festival, is indeed something for the history books.

COMMUNITY MENNONITE CHURCH
12184 Ninth Line, Stouffville • www.cmchurch.ca
SUNDAY SERVICE - 10AM • SUNDAY SCHOOL - 11AM

Up and coming

The Stouffville Free Press welcomes community event listings from non-profit groups and organizations. Please send a brief synopsis of upcoming events by email to stouffvillefreepress@rogers.com or call 905-640-3733. The deadline for the November issue is Oct. 22. For event updates visit stouffville.com.

- Oct. 1:** 10:30-11 a.m. weekly at the library: Storytime.
- Oct. 1:** 1:30-2 p.m. weekly at the library: Baby Goose for ages to nine months.
- Oct. 1:** 4-5 p.m. weekly at the library: Jolly Phonics for 4-year-olds.
- Oct. 2:** 10:30-11 a.m. weekly at the library: Baby Goose for ages to nine months.
- Oct. 2:** 11:30 a.m.-noon weekly at the library: Baby Goose for 10 to 24 months.
- Oct. 3:** 10:15-1:45 a.m. weekly at the library: Tapping Little Toes.
- Oct. 3:** 1-2:30 p.m. weekly at the library: Discovering Science for ages 3 to 6.
- Oct. 3:** 7 p.m. at the library: Library Board Meeting.
- Oct. 4:** 10:30-11 a.m. or 11:15-11:45 a.m. weekly at the library: Mother Goose on the Loose.
- Oct. 5:** 10:30-11 a.m. at the library: Storytime.
- Oct. 5:** 7:30-10 p.m. at 19 on the Park: Big Night Out-Paris fundraiser for Latcham Gallery. Tickets are \$40 at the gallery.
- Oct. 6:** 2 p.m. at the museum: Agatha Christie, Archeology and Alzheimer's Lecture by Dr. Amy Barron. Visit townofws.com/town_museumevents.asp for details.
- Oct. 7:** 10:15-10:45 a.m. and 7-7:30 p.m. weekly at the library: Storytime.
- Oct. 7:** 1-3 p.m. weekly at the library: OEYC Parent/Child Mother Goose.
- Oct. 7:** 4-5 p.m. at the library: After School Chess Club for ages 7 and up.
- Oct. 7:** 4-5 p.m. weekly at the library: Jolly Phonics for ages 5 and 6.
- Oct. 7:** 6-9 p.m. at Sleepy Hollow Golf Club: Mayor's Dinner hosted by the Chamber of Commerce. Call 905-642-4227 for tickets and information.
- Oct. 9:** 6-9 p.m. at Lemonville Community Centre: Landowner workshop with Trees Ontario and the Ontario Forestry Association. Visit www.treesontario.ca for details.

- Oct. 10:** 4-5 p.m. at the library: Math Made Easy for ages 5 and 6.
 - Oct. 10:** 7-8 p.m. at the library: E-resources demonstration.
 - Oct. 11:** 9 a.m.-4 p.m. at Latcham Gallery: PA Day Workshop for ages 4 to 10.
 - Oct. 15:** 4-5 p.m. at the library: Crafternoon for ages 7 and up.
 - Oct. 17:** 11:15-11:45 a.m. at the library: Preschool Craft.
 - Oct. 17:** 3:30-4 p.m. at the library: Candy Corn Bingo for ages 3 to 6.
 - Oct. 17:** 4:15-5 p.m. at the library: Candy Corn Bingo for ages 7 and up.
 - Oct. 16:** 7-8:30 p.m. at the library: Book Club.
 - Oct. 18:** 1 p.m. at Buckingham Manor: Parkinson Society presentation. All welcome. For more information call 905-640-6660 ext. 411.
 - Oct. 18:** 5:15-7:30 p.m. at the library: Halloween Party for ages 7 and up.
 - Oct. 18:** 5:30 p.m. at Eastridge Church: Stouffville Igoma Partnership dinner and auction. For more information visit www.sipartnership.org or call 416-346-5133.
 - Oct. 19:** 10 a.m.-2 p.m. at the Town offices: Recycling drop-off for electronics including computers, printers, cartridges, cell phones and televisions.
 - Oct. 19-20:** 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Stouffville Studio Tour.
 - Oct. 20:** 10 a.m.-3 p.m. at the museum: Volunteer Work Bee.
 - Oct. 20:** 2-4:30 p.m. at 19 on the Park: Scripts and Scores.
 - Oct. 21:** 7:45 p.m. at Christ Church: Stouffville Garden Club monthly meeting.
 - Oct. 23:** 10:30-11 a.m. at the library: Preschool Craft.
 - Oct. 24:** 4-5 p.m. at the library: Rapunzel's Book Club for Girls.
 - Oct. 24:** 4-5 p.m. at the library: Math Made Easy for ages 5 and 6.
 - Oct. 26:** 9:30-noon at St. James Presbyterian Church: Church Bazaar with baking, pie auction, jams, crafts, books, tea room and kiddies fun zone.
 - Oct. 26:** 10 a.m.-1 p.m. from Stouffville GO station: Halloween Hunt for Candy.
 - Oct. 26:** 10 a.m.-1 p.m. at Latcham Gallery: Free Family Art Day-Halloween.
 - Oct. 27:** 1 p.m. and 2:30 p.m. at the museum: Ghoul-icious: A Halloween Treat. Pre-registration required. Call 1-888-290-0337 for details.
 - Oct. 28:** 4-5 p.m. at the library: After School Chess Club.
 - Oct. 30:** 6 p.m. at Council Chambers, 111 Sandford Dr.: Official Launch of Whitchurch-Stouffville Clean Water Day. Light refreshments will be served.
 - Oct. 31:** 4-5 p.m. at the library: Math Made Easy for ages 5 and 6.
- The Stouffville Legion hosts affordable lunches every Wednesday, Thursday and Friday from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. and dinners Thursday and Friday nights from 5 to 8 p.m. Everyone welcome.**

Tasty Treats At St. James

On Oct. 26 from 9:30 a.m. to noon, St. James Presbyterian Church at 6432 Main St. in downtown Stouffville will hold its annual church bazaar. Items for sale include home baked goods, jams, crafts and books. You can sit and relax in the tea room or take your children to the kiddie fun zone, which is new this year. And don't forget to make your bid on a delicious treat at the pie auction.

Ghoul-icious

Bring your little ghouls to Whitchurch-Stouffville Museum for an exciting Halloween treat on Oct. 27 from 1 to 2:30 p.m.

All participating children will make pumpkin cookies, decorate a loot bag and go trick or treating on the museum grounds. Don't forget to wear your best Halloween costume! Admission is \$10 for children, \$5 for adults. Pre-registration is required. Recommended for ages 3 to 10.

Visit wsmuseum@townofws.ca or call 1-888-290-0337 for details.

