



Well known personalities from Stouffville, Markham and Uxbridge were members of a notorious gang of thieves during the 1840s, which has been documented in a soon to be released book called *Mayhem to Murder, The History Of The Markham Gang*, written by Paul Arculus.

## Upstanding Stouffville citizens part of 19th century 'Mafia'

In June 1845, the *British Colonist*, a popular Toronto newspaper, revealed that an organized gang of outlaws was in operation across the province.

They came mainly from the regions surrounding Toronto, including Stouffville. The press named them the Markham Gang.

The Markham Gang is the subject of the latest book by Port Perry historian Paul Arculus. The book is entitled *Mayhem to Murder* and is to be released Oct. 18th at a book launch in Port Perry. The range of crimes perpetrated by the gang was extensive, from petty theft, burglary, forgery and an elaborate system of horse stealing to murder. Their crimes extended throughout the province and beyond.

From evidence provided in court it was obvious that the crimes were carefully planned and executed. Details of the victims were gathered so that the offences could be committed with an optimum chance of success. Stolen goods and merchandise were disposed of, not in the community in which they were stolen, and not by those who had stolen them, but by other members of the gang in locations well away from the scenes of the crimes.

Markham Gang members were not idle, unemployed ne'er-do-wells or vagrants; they were successful merchants and businessmen, and errant sons and daughters of respectable families, their surnames readily recognized among the pioneer families and the early businesses in the communities of south-central Ontario. Stouffville area readers will recognize

names such as Badgerow, Burr, Green, Johnson, McLean, Morden, Pennock, Stoutenburg, Udell and Vanzant. T.P. White, after whom Whitevale is named, was among the wanted gang members.

Gang members took oaths of secrecy. They vowed to support each other in any way possible. They pledged to provide alibis in case they were arrested, and to back each other in court. It was alleged that constables and judges were threatened or bribed. This was a homegrown Canadian Mafia, a mob, one of the earliest known cases of organized crime in British North America.

After the trials, one gang member was executed. Four others were also sentenced to be executed. Then, quietly, their sentences were reduced to life in prison, but within five years they were mysteriously released. Most court and prison records have disappeared. Indeed, many of those convicted went on to become prominent citizens themselves; their criminal past somehow kept quiet.

Paul Arculus came across the story of the Markham Gang by chance. He was reading the Toronto newspapers of the 1840s in search of material for a biography of reformer Peter Perry when he came across the article in the *British Colonist*. *Mayhem to Murder* is the result of almost ten years of research.

Mr. Arculus is a former high school history teacher who has spent his retirement years researching and writing about the history of rural Ontario. *Mayhem to Murder* will be available in bookstores in October.

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Wed. Oct. 22	6pm-9pm	Sat. Oct. 25	9:30am-3:00pm
		Sat. Nov. 2	9:30am-3:00pm
Wed. Nov. 12	6pm-9pm	Sat. Nov. 15	9:30am-3:00pm
Wed. Nov. 19	6pm-9pm	Sat. Nov. 22	9:30am-3:00pm
Wed. Nov. 26	6pm-9pm	Sat. Nov. 29	9:30am-3:00pm

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