

THE VILLAGE OF STOUFFVILLE

Stouffville was founded by Abraham and Elizabeth Stouffer who came from Chambersburg, Pennsylvania in 1804 and purchased land on both sides of the Town Line in Concession 9. Here they built a mill around which this community developed. Earliest development took place in what is now the east end, around the 10th Line crossroads.

A second development focus centred on mills near Stouffville Creek in the vicinity of Mill and Market Streets. The railway line came through in the 1870s and brought prosperity and development further west.



Following the creation of the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville in 1971, a crest was developed as a symbol of the Town. Its images represent the three entities which contributed land and population to the new Town, Whitchurch and Markham Townships and the Village of Stouffville. A white church represents the former, the crosses of St. George and St. Andrew symbolize the earliest founders of Markham, and the star and chalice are from the family crest of Stouffville's founding Stouffer family.

THE WHITCHURCH-STOUFFVILLE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Whitchurch-Stouffville Historical Society was founded in 1987. Its purpose is to make the community more aware of its heritage through entertainment, education and participation. We encourage you to join us at our bi-monthly meetings. Further information is available in the Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library.

The Whitchurch-Stouffville Historical Society hopes that you enjoy this walking tour, and asks you to respect the privacy and property of the residents by keeping to the roads and sidewalks.

Every effort has been made to ensure accuracy in this brochure. Corrections and additional information will be gratefully received.

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STOUFFVILLE VILLAGE WALKING TOUR

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The Heart of Stouffville: East

including Main Street,
between Mill Street and Park Drive
and Church Street South of Main



**The Spofford & Mertens Blocks
(as they are today)**

Produced by the
Whitchurch-Stouffville
Historical Society
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The tour begins at the corner of Main and Mill Streets and takes the reader east (looking at the north side) to Park Drive, and back (looking at the south side). *The reader is advised to walk on the south side to observe buildings on the north and vice versa on the return trip.*

Land and Buildings in the Village Centre

Property history in this part of Main Street is obscured by irregularly shaped lots, numerous severances and some peculiar land usage rights.

The main business section, with its row of stores, has some unique terminology. To describe a business location without the benefit of street numbering, "blocks" were named after the current property owner or most prominent business occupant. Thus, over the years, several names may be found referring to one building.

The intersection of **Main, Mill & Market Streets** has long been the primary crossroads of the business area of Stouffville, and the names indicate why.

An 1888 photograph of the northeast corner of Mill & Main shows four frame houses with businesses on their main floors. The first two have been replaced; the others remain in altered form. Dr. Alex Sangster built (1890), rented, then sold **#6272** to Fred Spofford for his "Bargain House". The Mammoth consortium took over the Spofford Block in 1898, before building the Mammoth Building across the street. The block has had many owners and housed many businesses. (**#6272** & **6276** illustrated on cover.)

#6276, known as the Mertens Block, was built in the 1890s for William J. Mertens, who had his photography studio on the second floor. When Mertens moved to Toronto in 1905, Bill Sanders took over the photography business. The building was sold to the main floor tenant, George Collard, a chemist, and renamed the Collard Block. Two newspapers, the *Free Press* and the *Sentinel* were published here. A central tower and flagpole have been removed and the facade modified.

#6280 was built c1863 as a house for Richard Barnes on property owned in the 1830s by Benjamin Boyer, then John Boyer. It was the Shankel home until 1934 when Art Weldon bought it and added the storefront for his menswear and shoe shop. Len Wilkes sold clothing here, until it was bought by the Central Mennonite Committee in 1981.

#6284, originally a frame building, was Godfrey Shankel's harness shop before he turned to barbering. It became Milt Storry's pharmacy in 1933, and has remained a drug store ever since.

#6286/90 (built in 1986) replaces the original Sanders Block (1884) which was developed by W.B. Sanders on this site. E.A. Button moved his hardware

business here in 1912, where he remained for 30 years, followed by Riches', Hendricks' and Card's. Fred Button had a law office with James McCullough in this building.

#6294* (* illustrated in streetscape below) was built for Dr. A.C. Lloyd who rented the property to J.J. Rae for a grocery and dry goods store on the main floor; his son Frank Rae did tailoring upstairs. Later the Bank of Nova Scotia leased the store building, followed by the Mayfair Restaurant in the late 1940s.

After the brick house behind the store was moved to 21 Commercial Street (c1930), the next two stores were erected on what had been the front lawn. **#6296*** (1938) housed Harry Golden's clothing store and **#6298*** (1939) was a 5¢ to \$1 store operated by Hugh Bannerman.

From the next red-brick block through to the corner and north to the south side of the United Church parking lot is a one-acre lot where Charles Sheldon had his home

and store in 1832. After Sheldon, John Smith, then Lewis Moffitt owned the property. Dr. A.C. Lloyd bought the property in 1847, and his son-in-law Alex Sangster developed the business known as Sangster's Hotel.

After a fire destroyed the hotel in 1878, the property was subdivided and put on the market. The Main Street lots were purchased by W.B. Sanders, R.J. Daley (2 lots) and William Leancy, who each built a commercial block. Sanders and Daley collaborated c1882 to produce what appears to be a single, large block. The Sanders building, **#6302***, is distinguished by the keystones over the windows. Sanders' son, Harry, had a law office on the second floor. Well-known stores in this block were Rowbotham's general store and Roy Curtis' men's furnishings store.

The west half of R.J. Daley's Block, **#6304/6***, was the site of his own shoe store, then was owned by David Stouffer, 1894-1900. In 1919, Amos Lehman relocated his shoe store here from across the street. The second floor has housed a Masonic Hall, the public library (into the 1890s) and W.J. Stark & Walter Miller's private bank. Other businesses in this building have included a saddle/harness shop, "Shine" Davis' tobacco shop (a gathering place for the men), and Ken Laushway's insurance office. The east half, **#6308-12***, became known as the Sylvester Block. W.A. Sylvester and L. Dougherty had a hardware store here. They were succeeded by Reg Stouffer and Crest Hardware. Various other businesses have been in the block, including Paul Boadway's Dominion Store and Fong's Chinese Restaurant.



A commercial block built on William Leaney's corner lot c1880 became known as the Urquhart Block. John Urquhart had his dry goods business in #6314*. Being active in municipal matters, he arranged for the village offices to use space in the store. Dr. Richard Rowan, druggist, had the corner store, #6316* which has remained a drug store under four proprietors since. It was expanded into the west portion when owned by John Houston. Urquhart and Rowan were sons-in-law of Leaney.

Walkers may enjoy taking a walk along Commercial Street at the back of these blocks to see the individuality of each building.

Like most Ontario towns, Stouffville has a Church Street. Turn south along Church Street toward Memorial Park. #9 Church is located on the back half-acre of the property on Main Street, which was severed in 1893 by Charlotte Thompson (née Meyerhoffer). The house was built in the same year facing west. After a fire, the house was turned to face north.

At the south end of the street brick pillars mark the entrance to Memorial Park, where the historic bowling green, village tennis courts, ball diamonds and pool are located. The southern half of the park was not incorporated into the village until 1931.

Coming north, #6 on the west side of Church Street, built by John Bray in the late 1880s, is again a residence. Between times it has been a print shop and the municipal Building Department. Bray also built #8 and #10/12, a double house, about the same time as he built #6.

#14 Church, originally part of the Wilson Block seen to the north, was the shop of Thomas Shaw, a butcher and a veterinarian.

#6324 Main, on the north side, is greatly altered from the original, where the Burkholder brothers made furniture and operated an undertaking service. Casket making was a common sideline for furniture makers, and the undertaking was carried out in the home of the

deceased. In 1920, John Burkholder sold the business to William Mather, who sold to L.E. O'Neill. O'Neill's daughter, Fayc, and son-in-law, Gordon Minton, modified the building, creating the chapel where the furniture store had been.

At the turn of the century, the laneway to the east of O'Neill's was the location of one of three firehose reels in Stouffville. The two-wheeled, hand-drawn cart was stored here for easy access by the volunteer fire brigade.

From as early as the 1850s there was a store at #6328. In 1922 the lot was purchased from Frank Rowbotham to provide a site for the Carnegie-financed library, which served the community for 50 years.

#6332 was purchased in 1855 by William Leaney for his store, with his house to the east. Later, Clayt Baker had a dairy here. A small door for milk cans is still visible on the east side of the building. Archie Leaney had #6336 built in 1926 for his second wife, replacing the original house.

#6344 was built for William Yake, c1856. It was purchased by William Leaney, who passed it on to his widowed daughter, Margaret, before her marriage to John Urquhart, who had a dry goods store in the Urquhart Block. Photographer Ted Cadieux added the storefront. Tin cladding remains on the lower part of the house.

From here to the corner of Park Drive a one-acre lot was the site of Benjamin Boyer's house and store from 1829. The plan map of 1850 shows four buildings here, including a tavern. Innkeepers have

included Arden Smith, Henry Stapleton, Richard Knill and John Martin. Under Richard Knill's management a new brick hotel replaced a wooden building, and a large brick livery stable was built. An elaborate facade was added to the Queen's Hotel in 1889. In 1920, William H. Todd completely remodelled the building into two apartments, **The Queen's Court**, and built the two houses at #6358 and #6362. A curling rink was built at the back of the lot in 1923, with access from Park Drive. The Queen's Court was demolished in 1962.

Park Drive was originally called Peter Street. Cross here to the north side to return west looking at



south side buildings.

The corner site, #6401/3, was originally occupied by a frame building erected by William Leaney for Matthew Rae on a third of an acre lot. During the 1880s the Booker Bros. hardware store was here. Fred Wilson replaced this building with the existing 2½-storey brick house in 1923, but died shortly before its completion leaving it for his wife, Fannie, and son Dr. Harry Wilson.

Starting in the 1960s, Stouffville's growing population prompted the addition of storefronts to many Main Street houses, including #6397.

The 1½-storey brick house, #6393/5, has been much altered over the years. Built c1907 for retired Willow Works owner, William MacNabb, it was similar to #6391 next door which had been erected about seven years earlier.

Tin cladding was a popular siding material from the 1880s to early in this century. There were many such buildings in Stouffville, but few remain. #6385-9, containing businesses and apartments, is one of these and affectionately known as the "Tin Motel". Peter Shoefeldt had



an inn on this property in 1841, which may have been the existing building. The age of the building is suggested by the low doors at ground level. Richard Knill, a long-time owner of the inn (1853-70), advertised it as "Havelock House" in a Markham paper of 1863. In 1947 the west half of the property and building was sold as a separate dwelling. #6389 has been remodelled, while #6385/7 retains the tin cladding and exterior appearance of the late 1800s.

The house at #6383 was built in the "Nathan Forsyth style" for Fred and Fannie Wilson in 1893, as the first of three houses they owned on Main Street.



The east lobby of the post office occupies the site of the first church built for the Anglican congregation in 1882 using funds from a generous legacy left by Mary Ann Kennedy. This brick church and a 19th-century house to the west were torn down to allow for the construction of the post office building in 1967.

#6371 was built in the mid 1880s and at the turn of the century was the home of Thomas Smith, a labourer. The original verandah covered three sides of the house.

The "fine brick house", #6361, at the corner of Church, was built for F.L. Button in 1914 to replace earlier frame buildings which had housed a butcher shop operated by Robert Stewart, among other businesses. Thomas Dougall had his photography business and kept bees here from the 1870s.



#6345/49, known as the Wilson Block, was built in 1870 by Joseph Barkey on the small corner lot. He ran a hardware store in the east side, and a furniture/undertaking business in the west. James O'Brien and later James Dougherty took over the hardware business, while Samuel Burkholder moved the furniture/undertaking business kitty-corner across the street. Later businesses included Fannie Wilson's millinery and John Darroch's cabinetry shops. In 1928, Noah Baker bought and remodelled the Wilson Block, moving the main structure back on the lot and converting it to a double residence.

#6343, known as the Bray Block, was developed by John Bray, a tailor, in the mid-1880s. It had been the location of the Wismer and Von Busick Saddlery from the 1850s to the mid 1870s. Before the Wilson Block was moved

back on the lot, a small store joined the two and the entire group of buildings shared a facade with a cloud-like false front. Amos Lehman's shoe store was located here at the turn of the century, before he moved to the Daley Block across the street.

The clock tower marks the site of the village's first municipal building. The original 2-storey brick fire hall and council chamber had a wooden hose tower, and was constructed by Nathan Forsyth in 1899. Jacob Burkholder donated money for a library building attached to the back of the fire hall. Village Council met on the upper floor. In 1923 the library moved to the new Carnegie building, allowing the rear portion of the building to be used as a jail. In 1931 money was raised to rebuild the tower in brick and the clock was donated by Elizabeth Percy. A local service group paid for the addition of two washrooms at the back. All but the tower was demolished in 1967 when the Civic Centre was created; the municipal offices were moved into the old theatre building to the south and the fire bell was moved to the current fire hall.

The next building to the west, #6335, was built c1900 to house the Standard Bank, and later the Bank of Commerce in 1923. Following World War II the offices above the bank were used by Dr. Neil Smith, a dentist.

Behind the storefronts of #6329/31 can be seen a house built c1912 and owned by W.L. Rowbotham from 1932 to the 1960s. The storefront at #6329 was built in 1946 by Les Rowbotham, and added to by Ken Wagg for his jewellery store.

Where the IGA and Bank of Nova Scotia now stand, there were three houses. The east house was moved to 102 Manitoba Street in 1966. The other two houses were part of Mary Ann Kennedy's legacy to the Anglican Church. The terms of the legacy demanded an incumbent minister, but when the

congregation diminished, in 1920, the two houses were sold. They were demolished in the 1960s.

The CIBC, #6311, occupies the two north-east lots of a subdivision planned by owner R.J. Daley in 1889. Frank D. Miller built a commercial block on the east lot c1891. The *Tribune* newspaper office was in this building in the early 1900s, and later Alex Grubin had his jewellery shop here.

In 1903, the 3-storey Mammoth Block was completed on the west lot, built by a consortium led by Henrietta and Frank Spofford. Here they had a grocery store with a hall above; E.A. Button started his hardware store, before moving to the north side of the street; and the short-lived *Pilot* newspaper had its offices, among other businesses. The Spoffords' business failed in 1909, and the property passed through several hands before being purchased by Fred Ratcliff in 1920, when it became known as the Ratcliff Block. A variety of community entertainment was enjoyed in the upstairs hall at the back of the building. The Bethesda and Stouffville Telephone Co. was located on the second floor before moving to its own building. The Ratcliff Block burned down in 1971.

Back at Mill/Market, the tour concludes here.

