

“The Gordon House” was built as a hotel in 1881 by John Cuthbert. This impressive building displays skill and craftsmanship in the highly decorative brick facade and interior striped hardwood floors. James Gordon was proprietor for several years prior to purchasing the hotel in 1893, and his family continued to operate this establishment until 1952. During this period, the dining room developed a fine reputation for its home-cooked meals, prepared by Mrs. Susan Gordon. Early in the hotel’s history, the east wing was occupied by the Standard Bank. The building underwent extensive renovation in 1988.

# THE VILLAGE STORE

This small frame mercantile with attached residence was built here in the 1880's for Thomas Dyke, a local merchant, on what was then called King Street. The mercantile has survived largely intact, and retains much of its original detail. The recessed entrance, high windows and strong mullions give it a special charm. The attached residence, although much altered, is of a typical wood-frame, storey-and-a-half design.

Through the years, the building has housed a variety of businesses, and a library. Its most prominent occupants were Mr. and Mrs. Isaac Wise. During the 1890's they were involved in a variety of commercial ventures, including groceries, millinery, and the jewelry business. They were long time residents of the village, and active in community affairs. They are buried nearby in the Pickering Old Methodist cemetery on Elizabeth Street.

Erected by the Ajax L.A.C.A.C. 1994



## THE FOUNDING OF PICKERING

Between 1801 and 1807 a settlement developed here in Pickering Township where the Danforth Road crossed Duffin's Creek. Among the early settlers was Timothy Rogers, a prominent Quaker and colonizer who built a saw and grist-mill in 1809. A post-office was established in 1829 but the hamlet of Duffin's Creek developed slowly. The construction of the Grand Trunk Railway, completed in 1856, and growing agricultural prosperity stimulated the community's development as an important grist-milling and local commercial centre. Known as Pickering from the late 1870's, it became a police village in 1900 with about 1000 inhabitants. In 1953 it was made an incorporated Village and in 1974 amalgamated with the Town of Ajax.

Erected by the Ontario Heritage Foundation,  
Ministry of Culture and Recreation

# THE VILLAGE BELL

From this site, the rich vibrant tone of this bell could be heard throughout the village. For over fifty years, beginning in 1890, the village bell announced the outbreak of fire.

When the First Pickering Company of volunteer firemen was formed in 1888, money was collected from the villagers by subscription to ensure fire protection. The men rented the former Canton Presbyterian Church which then stood vacant on this site, and beside the church they built a six storey bell tower. This was considered to be a good central location.

Then the volunteer fire fighters ordered a 200 pound bell from the Clinton H. Meneely Bell Company in Troy, New York. When concern was raised that the bell might not be large enough to be heard everywhere, it was returned and this 500 pound bell was cast.

Whenever fire was discovered in the village, the first person to reach the fire hall would ring the bell to call the volunteers to report for duty.

Besides its principal function as a fire alarm, the bell was rung four times daily by a paid bell-ringer at the hours of 7, 12, 1 and 6 to announce the beginning of the work day, lunch time, the end of lunch hour and the close of the work day. On Sundays the bell called the villagers to worship at the various churches.

On V-E day, May 8, 1945, the bell rang out the good news all that day and the next, that the Second World War was over.

Among those citizens who were employed as bell-ringers were: George Gilders, Richard Moore, Isaac Wise, Robert Ham, George Cowan, Robert Rankin, George Elliott, and his wife, Elsie, the only woman known to have performed this duty. The Elliotts were the last bell ringers.

The village fire bell, though now silent, bears quiet testimony to earlier times in the Village of Pickering.

Erected by the Ajax L.A.C.A.C., 1996

# St. Francis Centre

The building, formerly known as St. Francis de Sales Catholic Church, was purchased by the Town of Ajax in 2007. It is one of Ajax's most historically significant and architecturally important landmarks.

This distinctive building was designed by Henry Langley, a prominent architect of the mid-1800s, who designed over 60 churches in Ontario. This building is an excellent example of high Gothic church architecture.

The building features polychromatic clay brick, which is red with buff accents. This brick was hauled from Whitby by horse and wagon. Its irreplaceable stained glass windows were donated by some of Pickering Village's early founding families. An interesting feature is the trefoil rose coloured dormer windows which pierce the roof and are unique to a village church.

Construction of the church began in 1869 and was completed in 1871. Many of the Irish Catholic parishioners were skilled craftsmen who helped to build this church.

Beginning in 2009 and completed in 2011, the former church underwent renovations to convert the building into a performing arts and culture centre for the Town. This acquisition was important as it represented the first publicly-owned, publicly accessible heritage facility in Ajax. As part of the renovations, a new glass addition was added to the front façade and various interior changes were made such as the inclusion of a stage.

Erected by Heritage Ajax 2011



# 1884

## THE DUNBAR GENERAL STORE

In 1883 J.R. Brownridge purchased a small parcel of land on this corner from Lydia Linton, the daughter of William Hartrick. She subdivided the front portion of the Hartrick estate, initiating the commercial growth on the north side of Old Kingston Road in Pickering Village. Brownridge built this general store shortly after acquiring the property, and in 1885 sold it to William Dunbar for \$1,250. The Dunbar name was prominent in the Pickering area; the Village of Dunbarton was named for William's grandfather, William Dunbar Senior. With his wife Margaret, William continued to operate this general store until 1912 when he sold it to James Richardson, a local grocer.

At the time of construction, the architectural style of this retail building was considered very modern for a small farming community such as Pickering Village. Commercial centres in larger towns and villages in southern Ontario were developing streetscapes dominated by two-storey, flat roofed stores. Devoid of windows, the adjoining side walls were built on the property line to utilize the narrow urban lot and to allow for the sharing of a common wall. The name Dunbar was once prominently painted on the front facade, and a front porch and wooden sidewalk have succumbed to an expanding Kingston Road.

Situated at this busy crossroad, the Dunbar Store is a visible reminder of the commercial centre of Pickering Village before the turn of the century.

Erected by the Ajax L.A.C.A.C. 1993

# DALE BLOCK

80, 82, 84 Old Kingston Road

The Dale Block was the largest commercial building in Pickering Village. Originally a hotel owned by Peter Head, it became a store and residence when Edmund Wright purchased it in 1874. With its decorative brickwork and detailed parapet, it was one of the most impressive structures in the village.

Many prominent community members operated businesses generally dry goods or hardware, from here. The unique single storey portion on the east end was used as a residence. The Local Independent Order of Oddfellows met in the large second floor meeting room known as Dale's Hall.

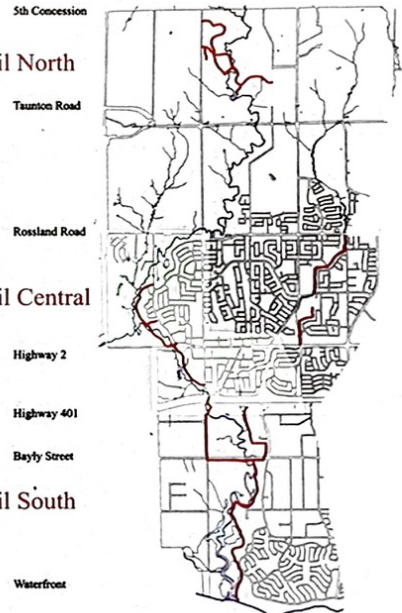
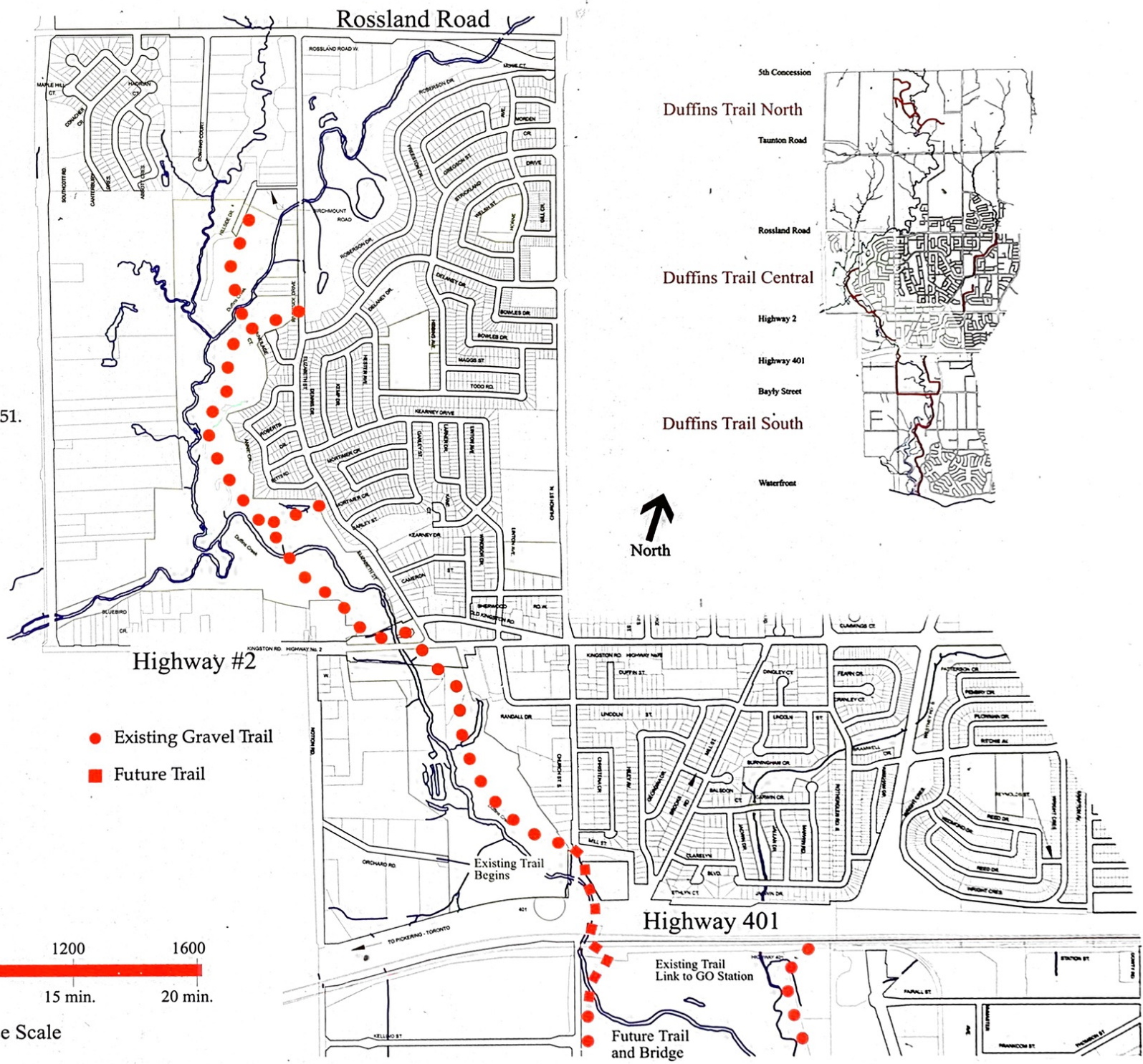
For many years Christopher Dale, who was born in Pickering Village, ran a hardware store in this building. In 1890 he purchased the east half of the building. Christopher Dale and eleven other family members are interred in the Society of Friends cemetery on Mill Street.

# DUFFINS TRAIL SYSTEM

## Central

When using the trail, please keep in mind the following:

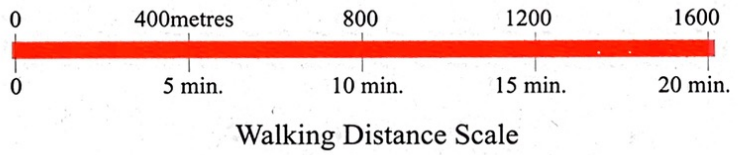
- Be respectful of the environment and stay on the paths.
- Leashes must be leashed at all times.
- Trails are closed dusk to dawn.
- Obey all regulatory signs.
- Some sections of this trail are surfaced with gravel; use as advised.
- For more information, please contact the Town of Ajax, Parks and Environmental Services at 905-683-2951.
- For more information on Ajax Trails, please visit our website at [www.townofajax.com](http://www.townofajax.com).



- Existing Gravel Trail
- Future Trail



Hiking the Duffins Trail



North

Duffins Trail North

5th Concession

Taunton Road

Rossland Road

Duffins Trail Central

Highway 2

Highway 401

Bayly Street

Duffins Trail South

Waterfront

Highway #2

Highway 401

Existing Trail Begins

Existing Trail Link to GO Station

Future Trail and Bridge