

Historic Trail Elgin Pond

One of the reasons why Uxbridge is here



ABOVE AND RIGHT: The oat mill on Mill Street was one of the largest buildings in town. It was built in 1886 and was demolished in 1957 after part of it collapsed. The small building beside it was the kiln for drying the grain, and it is still there (photo on right), used as a residence.



Elgin Pond, first known as Park Pond, is one of the reasons why Uxbridge is where it is today. The Uxbridge Brook provided a steady supply of running water, and Joseph Gould, and later his son, dammed the brook to create ponds, which acted as reservoirs to provide water-power for their mills. These ponds (Elgin Pond, the Electric Light Pond and the Mill Pond that once covered Centennial Park) were essential sources of power to drive the water-wheels that in turn operated the machinery in the saw mill, the grist mills and the carding (woollen) mill. Elgin Pond has provided recreation for generations of Uxbridge kids and adults; hundreds of children over the years have learned to swim here. Today, it provides the location for the Duck Derby, the Fishing Derby and for skating.



The view from the bridge looks very similar today, except that the road is paved, and there are more buildings at the far end of the pond.



Elgin Pond -- in glorious black and white . . . and in questionable colour! When this picture was taken, around 1920, colour photographic film had not been invented. So it was common to have hand-coloured versions of photographs, which were then printed as post-cards. As the wording states, the pond was still known as Park Pond at that time. Note how the artist decided to change the season, and render the trees in full leaf.

Archival photographs and historical information provided by the Uxbridge Historical Centre



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A project of the Rotary
Club of Uxbridge
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Historic Trail Elgin Park

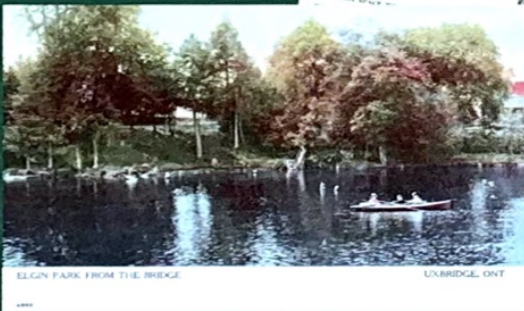
150 years of family fun



Spring Fair - Uxbridge - May 24/07.



BELOW: The park looks much the same today, in this postcard view across Elgin Pond. What is NOT the same is the postage -- it was 1 cent in 1907.



Elgin Park has been the place for family fun since the 1860s. Even before it was named Elgin Park in 1873 (after Lord Elgin, James Bruce, Governor General of Canada, 1846-1854), Uxbridge residents used to gather in the "South Woods" for picnics. A half-mile race track was built in 1881, and horse racing became a popular attraction. The track was used until at least 1950. The shape of the race track can still be seen today in some parts of the park -- the curving path just inside the Main Street gate is one section of the old track. In 1876, a campaign picnic in connection with a byelection was addressed by Sir John A. Macdonald; it was so successful, he organized similar picnics elsewhere, and won the byelection.

Archival photographs and historical information provided by the Uxbridge Historical Centre



In the 1920s, family picnics were a serious, and a formal, affair!



The Uxbridge Fall Fair has been held in the park for many decades. The Coke truck in this 1950s picture came from the Uxbridge Coca-Cola plant (which actually made the Fanta orange drink), located where the spice plant now operates.



Historical Information Plaque



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Historic Trail

Electric Light Pond

Uxbridge's original power source



The Electric Light Pond was so named because it supplied water power to generate the town's first electricity, in the late 1880s. The water-driven generator was housed in what had formerly been a grist mill. The photo at left shows the mill/power house, with the chimney added when coal-fired steam was used to turn the generators. The photo shows the bridge that once served as the access from the main road to Joseph Gould's lands. That bridge was replaced by the dam at the north end of the pond.



On the main road beside the pond (now Highway 47), visitors were greeted by this sign. Hopefully, Uxbridge will continue to live up to its old slogan - "A live town to live in".



The building above served many purposes - first a grist mill, then a power station, and then a creamery. The chimney was left standing long after the building had vanished, but was taken down in 1983 (see photo at left). Bricks from the chimney were sold to raise funds for the extension to the library.

Archival photographs and historical information provided by the Uxbridge Historical Centre



This photo, from the 1920s, shows the original bridge across the pond, looking south down the main road (now Highway 47), with the pond in the background. Note that the paved road ends, and for some reason, the sign welcomes visitors as they leave the town.



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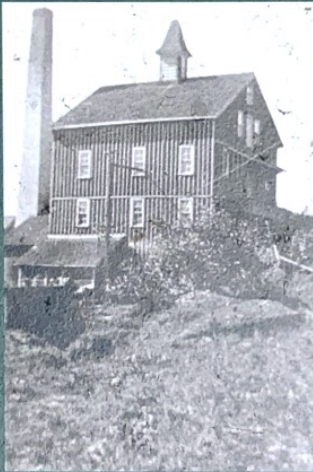


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Historic Trail Mill Street

The industrial centre of old Uxbridge

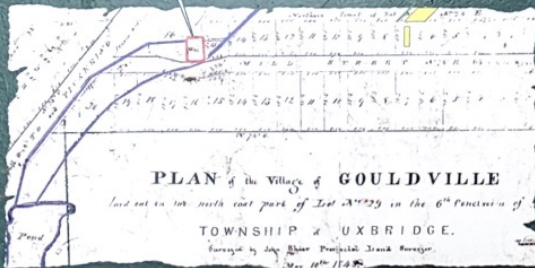


In the late 1880s equipment was installed in the mill to generate electricity for the town, and the pond became known as the Electric Light Pond. Eventually the generator was powered by coal-generated steam. The mill later became a creamery, and when the large chimney was taken down in 1983, the bricks were sold to raise funds for the library addition. A commemorative plaque and many of the original bricks are built into a wall in the lower level of the library (photo above).

Mill Street, named for the three mills that were once along it, was the centre of the first registered plan of Uxbridge in the late 1840s. This area was owned by Joseph Gould, a developer, miller, merchant, entrepreneur and parliamentarian, and was initially known as Gouldville. A little further west along Mill Street, Joseph Gould built a grist mill in the 1840s (picture at left). A sluiceway from a mill pond, later named the Electric Light Pond, ran alongside Toronto Street and crossed Mill Street. The water then went down a large pipe to turn the mill wheel. (See the blue overlay on the original 1848 survey map of Gouldville, below).



The photo above shows Pond Street, near the intersection with Mill Street, in the 1890s -- about where you are standing now. Note the Anglican Church in the background, which was built in 1875. The streets were not paved until the 1920s. In this area, Joseph Gould built many houses for the workers at his mills. They typically had steep pitched roofs, and a few remain today.



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