

Foreword by Lorne R. Smith

It is a pleasure to read this fourth volume of *Our Lands Speak* series, the product of a collaboration between William D. Finlayson of This Land Archaeology Inc. and George Duncan, our local architectural historian. The thoroughness of the research that went into the writing of this book opens another window into the very early history of the City of Markham.

The Eckardt family narrative and their log house form an integral part of the Berczy Settler story of the initial colonial settlement of Markham. My first ancestor in America, Francis Schmidt, travelled with Philip Eckardt on the ship the *Catharina* in its Atlantic crossing from Altona, Germany to Philadelphia in 1792. Together with the other settlers they opened the first inland trail from Philadelphia northward through the Alleghany Mountains to the Genesee Valley in New York State. They also worked together opening Yonge Street and clearing the Rouge River to make it navigable as far as Box Grove (originally named Sparta).

The Eckardt Log House has become a symbol of those settlers arriving in Markham in the fall of 1794 to establish the first European-Canadian community in Markham Town-

ship. It is a visible linkage to our past and a monument to history that is so important to our city. Its location adjacent to Settlers Hill Park in the Upper Unionville community and to the Bethesda Lutheran Cemetery, the burial site of a number of those first settlers, has created a significant visual representation of the early history of Markham.

George Duncan has captured the complex history of the Eckardt family, some of it based on verifiable facts and some of it rooted in family folklore, and he's put this wealth of information into a compelling narrative of a vanished past. George has taken a careful look at the remarkable architectural history of Markham's oldest house and worked to fit together the pieces of a challenging puzzle.

Two centuries or more of this early farmstead's history are brought to life with William Finlayson's detailed account of the extensive archaeological investigations that were carried out in the vicinity of the Eckardt Log House in 2012. Rarely do we see such a thorough analysis of an historic farmstead that combines the history of a family, a building, and its archaeological context in one document. Evidence for two historic kitchen wings and numerous features of interest in the surrounding landscape, were revealed by the excavations that greatly enhance our knowledge of the lives of those who lived

here. I was particularly struck with the analysis of all the animal bone fragments found on the site.

The City of Markham can be proud of its efforts to save significant and representative samples of early architecture, with the Eckardt Log House as its premier example. These buildings provide a physical representation of how the early and later settlers lived and progressed as their wealth improved. These windows to the past become ever more valuable as we advance into the future. This book provides one of the most vivid pictures we have of a first settler family, their changing accommodation, and their lifestyle. This is particularly relevant today as we see the increasing development of Markham's first-class farmland that provided the livelihood of generations of subsequent settlers.

Well done, William Finlayson and George Duncan.

Lorne R. Smith
Official Historian, City of Markham