

Preface

During the past 18 years, my archaeological assessment company, This Land Archaeology Inc., has investigated more than 80 19th century homesteads and farmsteads. There are similarities in what we reveal in our excavations. Most often, we discover a 19th century cellar which may represent the second-generation home on the property and sometimes we find evidence of the much smaller cellar of the first-generation log house which preceded the frame house. We also uncover a variety of other features such as wells, cisterns, drains, and posts or post moulds representing the remains of fences. Privies are a welcome find in that they contain different kinds of artifacts, including liquor bottles and broken treasured items such as a mother's favourite candy dish. What a better place to hide something that one hopes another will not find. These privies also often produce thousands of raspberry seeds, a byproduct of the making of raspberry jellies or cordials, which were discarded in the privy to avoid attracting flies. There are other features in the subsoil as well, such as natural depressions which were filled in with soil, sometimes containing artifacts in an attempt to level the surface of the land. Occasionally, we find evidence of ancient treefalls likely toppled by strong winds, also leaving a natural depression in the ground which had to be levelled.

We discover a diversity of artifacts which normally include nails, window glass, mortar and plaster, and building materials remaining from the former dwellings. There are varying amounts of dinnerware—plates, bowls, cups, and saucers, discarded after being broken—along with cutlery mainly including knives, forks, and spoons. A smaller number of other items such as fragments of white clay smoking pipes, buttons, coins, and pieces of slate writing tablets and slate pencils have surfaced too. The number and variety of all these items differs depending on the nature and extent of the excavations.

We also uncover the bones of mammals, birds, and sometimes fish, evidence of the diet of the site's occupants. These are examined by specialists, faunal analysts, who tell us what the preferred sources of meat were, the extent of the use of chickens, ducks, and geese in the diet, and whether fish was an important source of food.

As part of the investigation of each homestead or farmstead, we search the historical records to find out who originally received the grant to settle the land, what conditions had to be fulfilled as part of the land grant, and who the subsequent owners of the land were during the 19th and 20th centuries.

As I reflect on the dozens of such sites excavated since 2005, I am continually intrigued by the differences we find during our investigations. I recall two sites that were excavated in Bowmanville where one of the cellars dug had wooden planks to hold back the sandy soils in the cellar walls. Down the street

we dug another cellar and in one corner, dozens of buttons were found, suggesting a seamstress must have lived there.

This is the fourth volume in Our Lands Speak popular series of books on the excavations undertaken by my company. Each book examines one or more of the sites excavated and tries to convey to the general public the fascinating knowledge, and subsequent contributions to local history, derived from our investigations. As readers of the first three volumes will realize, there are significant differences in these contributions which again, are quite unique from the stories told by historians based on written documents. Each tells a special part of the story which would be less complete without the other.

Our work at the Philip Eckardt Log House, the oldest standing residence in the City of Markham, provides yet another example of the diversity of information gained from the extensive excavations at the site. Included were the evidence for not one, but two sequential kitchen wings on the southern end of the site, the presence of a second dwelling south of the log house, perhaps occupied by a hired hand and his family, and a wider than normal range of unusual artifacts found among the assemblage of the 105,939 artifacts recovered.

However, this book in particular has benefited greatly from my collaboration with George Duncan, an Architectural Historian, recently retired as heritage planner for the City of Markham. George originally assisted in helping to define the extent of the excavations around the house in 2012. His

documentation of the interesting process by which this distinctive small log house survived for more than two centuries, includes the life of Philip Eckardt, one of the Berczy Settlers who emigrated to Markham township in the late 18th century. He also details the architecture of this remarkable house and the modifications to it, not only since 1948, but in the late 19th or early 20th centuries. I certainly have a much greater appreciation for this log house and its history because of my alliance with George.

I conclude by reiterating my reasons for creating Our Lands Speak popular series of books. As was the case with other volumes, my intention is to provide recognition to the land developers, in this case Upper Unionville Developments (TACC Developments), for their part in funding the excavations and their efforts in preserving the house. In too many cases, the results of such excavations end up as a report on file with the Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries where it is seen by very few. Further, I wish to share with the general public the intriguing results of archaeology of 19th century sites in southern Ontario.

The opportunity to revisit excavations conducted years ago and reconsider the artifacts found, as well as the knowledge gained, is a most rewarding experience.