

Town of Ajax History – *Industry*

In 1945 with the closing of D.I.L., there was no industry within the Town; but in 1949 Dowty Aerospace started operations in Ajax, and with its arrival the word spread that Ajax was a town with good attraction for industry. In 1979 there were 196 industries operating within the Town. 1991 shows a total of 217 industries with some major employers such as Volkswagen Canada, Chrysler Canada, Dupont, Paintplas, Ajax Textile, AEG Bayly Engineering and many others.

Shopping was virtually non-existent in the mid 1940s but by 1970 major shopping centres such as Ajax Plaza, Harwood Place Mall and Clover Ridge Plaza were constructed. The 80s saw an expansion of retail shopping malls to include Discovery Bay Plaza, Transit Square, Baywood Plaza, Westney Heights Plaza plus many small retail strip units located throughout the Town.

The 70s saw the beginning of many physical changes to the face of Ajax. New subdivisions spread over vacant land in central Ajax. The early 1980s brought extensive development to the southern part of Ajax with large, upscale housing units constructed along Lake Driveway. The late 1970s and early 1980s saw extensive high rise development alter the skyline of Ajax and by 1990 the exclusive Breakers condominium complex at Harwood and Lake Driveway had been constructed.

The recession of the early 1980s did not stop residential development in Ajax. Westney Heights started north of Highway 2 and offered home buyers low interest rate mortgages while current interest rates were at an all-time high of 18% to 20%. Development north of Highway 2 stretched from Church Street in Pickering Village to Harwood Avenue, with the Millers Creek development south of the highway down to the edge of Highway 401.

The Ajax Public Library expanded its facility in the mid 1970s to serve the expanded population. The growth in Ajax between 1980 and 1990 prompted the Library Board to plan a further expansion. A new main branch opened in 2003, for a total of three branches: the large main branch next to Town Hall, the McLean Branch within McLean Community Centre, and the smaller Village Branch in Pickering Village.

Recreation facilities expanded from the original 1966 Ajax Community Centre to include a full size Olympic swimming pool, squash courts, workout room and more meeting rooms. When Pickering Village became part of Ajax, the Village Arena became part of the Town's recreational facilities. New residents to Ajax with young families prompted the development of baseball diamonds, soccer fields, playgrounds, parks, bicycle paths and waterfront walkways to satisfy the hunger for sport and leisure. The community grew so fast that in 1990 a \$14-million expansion and renovation to the Ajax Community Centre was approved. A new centre, the McLean Community Centre, was opened in 1994, and underwent a \$4-million expansion that opened in 2001.

The need for fire protection called for construction of a new fire hall and headquarters at Centennial Road and Monarch Avenue in the 70s, and a further fire hall at Highway 2 and Westney Road in the mid 80's.

The Ajax and Pickering General Hospital first opened in 1954 with 38 adult and children's beds. It was expanded to 50 beds in 1958 and a major expansion to 127 beds took place in 1964. The emergency and outpatient services were expanded in 1975. The large growth of population in the Town has prompted a further expansion. Approval was granted in the fall of 1990 to further

expand. In 1999 the Hospital merged with Centenary Health Centre in Scarborough to become part of the Rouge Valley Health System.

As the Town started to expand, it became obvious to Council that some means of public transportation was necessary. Following a modest beginning, Ajax Transit continued to expand to meet the public transit needs of Ajacians. The local transit system was fully integrated with the schedule of the GO Train when it officially began service in December 1988. Transit Square, with its many amenities, is indeed one of the most inviting of all GO stations in Ontario. In early 2000, the Councils of Ajax and Pickering agreed to merge their transit systems, and Ajax Pickering Transit Authority was created.

The Ballycliffe Lodges nursing home on Station Street was once the booming Carousel Motel with a large dining room, entertainment and meeting rooms. The Royal Canadian Legion on Hunt Street was expanded in the mid 1970s. The anchor that presently sits at the front of the building was presented to the Ajax Branch in 1987 by the British Admiralty. The anchor is from the HMS Ajax, which was decommissioned in 1985.

During the 1970s the Durham School Board built Duffins Bay Public School to serve the growth in the south-western area of Ajax. As development in this location of the Town neared completion, Lakeside Public School was opened in 1986. To cope with the phenomenal growth in the Westney Heights subdivision area, Westney Heights Public school opened in 1984, to be followed by Lester B. Pearson Public School, which came on stream in 1988. Residential development immediately to the west and north of the Old Village, previously well served by an enlarged Lord Elgin Public School, brought about the opening of the Roland Michener Public School in 1988. In 1991 Cadarackque Public School opened to serve the area south of Highway 2 and east of Pickering Beach Road.

During the 70s the Durham Region Separate School Board demolished the original St. Bernadette's School and built a large new addition to its other school on the same site. In the next decade St. James Catholic School was built at the corner of Harwood Avenue South and Clover Ridge Road West. Denis O'Connor High School was relocated to Ajax from its Whitby location. During 1991 construction of St. Catherine of Sienna Catholic School began in the Westney Heights area of the Town. Despite the addition of all these new schools, the growing school population cannot be accommodated without recourse being taken to the use of portables which surround the main buildings of virtually all schools.

Since the 70s when both St. Bernadette's Church and St. Timothy's built additions or made renovations, St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church built an addition. The Ajax Alliance Church, Pickering Village United Church and the Christian Life centre opened their doors to serve the spiritual needs of the citizens of our growing Town. 1991 saw the start of renovations to the Church of the Holy Trinity and St. George's in Pickering Village.

The restaurant scene in Ajax has seen many changes over the years. However, it was with the opening of a number of fast food outlets - Mary Browns Fried Chicken, McDonalds, Burger King, Scott's Chicken Villa, Pizza Hut and Tim Horton's - that Ajax youth felt that "Ajax had arrived"! Now, the town seems to have its own location for every fast-food restaurant available.

Administrative officials of Ajax have always played a very significant part in the Town's history. The 1970s saw changes here, too. After serving Ajax well since 1966, Mondeau Beauchamp resigned in 1973 and later became a Development Officer for the Region of Durham. In the same year, Albert Hodges became the Clerk-Treasurer. In 1973, David J. Low was appointed Chief

Administrative Officer to oversee the Town's growing administrative staff. In 1974, the Clerk-Treasurer position was split. Albert Hodges assumed the duties of Clerk and H.E. "Ward" Irwin the duties of Treasurer.

To service the needs of an expanding Town population, the Town staff and administrative personnel increased from approximately 120 in 1980 to about 300 in 2000, with new departments such as Business Development, Human Resources and Transit being formed.