



GEORGINA

Local Self-Governance

In 1792, Ontario (Upper Canada) was divided into districts; Georgina was part of the Home District. Matters of administration and justice within the districts were handled by several levels of courts. The lower court dealt with matters such as roads, taverns, assessments, and minor crimes. This court was called the District Court of General Quarter Sessions of the Peace. The Quarter Sessions were presided over by local Justices of the Peace, who met four times a year. Georgina Justices included William Johnson, James O'Brien Bouchier, Thomas Mossington, William Kingdom Rains, Simon Lee, John Mills Jackson, and Arad Smalley. Justices were appointed by the Lieutenant Governor.

After the rebellions in Upper and Lower Canada (1837-1838), Lord Durham was sent by the British Parliament to assess the situation in Canada. He reported back that Upper and Lower Canada should unite to become the Province of Canada; this was done by an Act of Union in 1841. Out of this Act of Union came the District Councils Act (1841), which was a step towards local self-governance, whereby each township was represented by a Crown-appointed warden and elected Councillors. These District Councils met four times a year.

In 1849, the Baldwin Act (Municipal Corporations Act) was passed, allowing for even more self-governance by way of Responsible Government. The District Councils were replaced by County Councils. These were governed by the Reeves (and Deputy Reeve, where one existed) of the townships within the county.

Townships were self-governed by elected Ward Councillors and these Councillors elected from among themselves a Reeve. Townships met monthly and created By-Laws to appoint township officers, construct roads, bridges, town halls and schools, control and license taverns, and more.



W.H. Johnston of Pefferlaw. "Mr. Johnston has always been a public spirited citizen and served as Deputy Reeve of Georgina Township. He was also a member of the York County Council for some years, and was Warden of the County in 1906."