

## Geographical / Historical Information

Springwater Provincial Park is in Midhurst ON (North of Barrie on Hwy.#26); it has been a traditional meeting place for the Coutts Reunion since the 1920's. Located in the park was a wildlife zoo, running streams, ponds, a large sports field and main pavilion all located in a forest setting. The Simcoe County Museum is located close by (a few items were donated by the Coutts family).

Midhurst and the surrounding area were once in the Township of Vespra, it is now known as the Township of Springwater. Simcoe County is the region, also known as Huronia to commemorate the Hurons who were the indigenous inhabitants. Ontario is the province (formerly known as Upper Canada).

Originally covered by virgin forests, the early settlers cleared the land (converting a lot of White Pine to charcoal). Duncan Coutts had purchased this 100 acre farm (40+ hectares) but it only had 15 acres cleared (arable) and a basic log cabin. The first thirty years must have been difficult indeed, cutting trees, pulling stumps, making charcoal, picking stones, fencing, planting crops, harvesting and constructing buildings!

The Coutts farm in Springwater once had a Huron Burial Pit (Ouendat ossuary) and a Huron Village (Vespra Site 19).

Duncan Coutts and two of his sons discovered the ossuary (burial pit) when they removed a large stone as they cleared fields on the farm. They contacted authorities and the University of Toronto sent people to examine the find. Some of the artifacts from the grave site were taken to Toronto by the archaeologists, including some skeletal remains and several items that were rumoured to have made it to a museum collection in London England.

In the early days of horse drawn ploughs indigenous artifacts were regularly discovered on the surface of the land. Many were collected and stored in the back kitchen / pantry of the farm house (arrow heads, pipes and pottery were kept in large glass jars). Nothing of these discoveries remain today on the farm, however there is a reconstructed Huron / Ouendat Village near Midland ON.

The original Coutts farm (Lot 20 Concession 2 Township of Vespra) is on an elevated area that forms an island of land surrounded by Willow Creek, Little Lake and low lying wet areas. Apparently these hills were part of an indigenous trail passing from North (Orillia) to South (Barrie) going around the West side of Kempenfelt Bay / Lake Simcoe.

A cairn on the former family farm (Old 2nd Line) commemorates the first 150 years in Canada.