



Cabbagetown Preservation Association NEWSLETTER

Preserving the architectural integrity and historic character of our neighbourhood

Parliament Street Challenge New Hope for Cabbagetown's High Street?

Drawing the Line: Bill Stapleton exhibit p4

Seeing beyond "house" to appreciate "home" p5

Restoring your home? See p6

With its eclectic and extreme mix of income, ethnicity and lifestyle, its history and heritage architecture, Parliament could potentially be one of the most interesting streets in the city. Challenges such as absentee landlords, inner city adventures and a market of varied needs and tastes has made development of the street into a commercially healthy neighbourhood center formidable. Despite that the street has a number of great restaurants, unique stores and services. Over the last couple of years there has been local interest demonstrated in protecting the street - as seen in the lively Winchester Hotel negotiations that resulted in good outcome for the developer and the community. Again, we have just had a situation where residents have questioned a developer, leading to a negotiation that has benefitted both the residents and the builder. The following report from the BIA and the DVCRA report on page 6 will fill in the details. And on November 26 there will be a CPA Night at the Stone Grill exploring a Victorian restoration route to helping upgrade the street. See below for details.

Cooperative Action

A new building on the southwest corner of Aberdeen and Parliament has been designed and approved for construction. It will bring a new, refreshing look to this part of Parliament Street.

The project is a good example of cooperative efforts between the owner, the architects and various community groups. The BIA, the Aberdeen Avenue Residents Group, the Cabbagetown Preservation Association and the general public were all consulted and given a chance to react to the plans before they were finalized. Thanks to these meetings, the building's features now respect the privacy of Aberdeen residents and enhance its impact on both the nearby residential and commercial streets.

For the BIA, the new commercial space on the first floor is very important. New projects like this building must contribute to the commercial character of Parliament Street. It is not acceptable to remove older commercial space and simply replace it with newer residential space. Otherwise, we would witness a hollowing-out of our business activity along the street.

The rear areas of the commercial buildings on Parliament and Carlton are also being improved as part of the same project. Aberdeen residents have been pressing for several years to soften these service areas. The work at 492 Parliament will include an ownership transfer of the laneway behind these buildings to the City of Toronto. Upgrading this laneway is an important step in these renewals (along with repainting the buildings and landscaping the Green P lot.)

At this time, the plans have successfully passed through the official processes at the City of Toronto. Demolition permits for the current structure have been issued and the plan for the new building has been accepted by the City's Committee of Adjustment.

Doug Fisher, Old Cabbagetown BIA



492 Parliament Road
Front Perspective
Artist's Rendering

CPA Night at the Stonegrill

Now is the time for Parliament Street to realize its heritage potential

Twice a year the CPA hosts an neighbourhood evening featuring a speaker on a heritage topic. All are invited, members and non-members.

Where: The bar at The Stonegrill Restaurant, Winchester and Parliament

Date: Monday, November 26th

Time: The space is open at 6:45 pm for the presentation at 7:00

Speaker: George Rust d'Eye, local historian

Topic: The heritage potential of Parliament Street
Parliament Street has survived through 200 years of good times and bad times, ending up as the confused main street of one of Toronto's great historic neighbourhoods. But maybe Parliament Street's time has come, with its potential for designation as a Heritage Conservation

District, the stabilization and vitality of the Cabbagetown neighbourhood and the anticipated revitalization of the Regent Park area. What heritage assets does Parliament Street have, and what can be done with them, to enable the street to realize its potential?

Streetscapes in Bloom awards will be given, there will be an update on HCD progress west of Parliament and CPA memberships will be available.

SPECIAL FROM THE STONEGRILL: Make an evening of this CPA event. Come early for a special "prix fixe" menu that night for only \$25.00 (tax, tip, and beverage extra) to all who indicate they are staying for the meeting. **If you take advantage of this offer, we recommend arriving for dinner between 5-5:30.**

www.cabbagetownpa.ca

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Think Jamie Oliver – in Cabbagetown

Caroling for Cans

We live in an age where all the advantages of the electronic age are supposed to simplify our lives. What they do is make us available 24/7 and turn us into multi-tasking octopi with time being the last thing on our hands. Enter Gabrielle Osborne of Urbanmaven who caters to time-starved professionals who value responsible assistance, good food and a casual elegance.

Two years ago Gabrielle and her husband Peter Hodgson, packed their children Sam & Isobel off to university. The massive presence and exaggerated energy generated by teenagers had emptied their Beaches home, so they decided to move to the more centrally located Cabbagetown. As Gabrielle explains, "the architecture and community feel of the neighbourhood were a big drawing card for us."

As a stay-at-home mother and garden designer, Gabrielle was actively involved in shopping, cooking and organizing – catering to the voracious appetites of teenagers and their friends and juggling schedules. Often her friends would call upon her to help them out as well. These friends and family members encouraged Gabrielle to start her own business assisting people, who were too busy with their own lives or unable for reasons of age or infirmity to perform the tasks that Gabrielle did with such ease and flair. And so Urbanmaven was born.

"I love to cook with an emphasis on fresh and often organic ingredients," Gabrielle explains, "I call myself a good bistro cook with an emphasis on lots of fresh herbs. Think Jamie Oliver."



Gabrielle at the Farmers' Market, Riverdale Farm © Dagda

Gabrielle is a wonderful resource and respite for today's over-extended families. Her services include personal errands such as shopping for groceries and collecting dry cleaning, or selecting the perfect gift for any occasion. Within the home she can organise that maddeningly cluttered closet, or sort out the dreaded basement. On the lighter side, her love of garden design makes her a perfect choice to design a spectacular garden arrangement for that special visual lift.

A thoughtful and resourceful husband recently surprised his full-time working wife with a gift of Gabrielle's services. This included a 4-week meal plan for their busy family of five. As an example, one of Gabrielle's favourite autumn meals is a bowl of homemade soup made from seasonal vegetables, a big chunk of artisanal bread with a special cheese, and an arugula salad with fresh vinaigrette, accompanied with the perfect wine.

Gabrielle explains, "I really believe in shopping locally wherever possible, whether it be for produce, a dress, or a piece of furniture. I believe there is a need for this service as time is an ever-decreasing commodity and we all strive to keep our lives in balance." This is where Urbanmaven can help you. You can reach Gabrielle 416-554-6943.



by C. Moore-Ede

It all began innocently enough one July evening about 12 years ago. We had invited a group of neighbours in for a Saturday night dinner during the course of which, and for no known reason, some of us began to sing Christmas carols. By so doing, we discovered that some of us could sing and an even smaller number knew all the words! This event triggered some thoughts about what to do with these newly discovered talents. "What if we just went to the corner and sang some carols before Christmas?" "What if we dressed up and strolled the streets singing?" "What if we sang for a charity and asked for food donations?"

And so it began.

For the past 12 years, a small group of residents of Cabbagetown have organized a night of caroling for charity, affectionately called "Caroling for Cans". In the beginning, all donations were dropped off at CBC radio 740AM, located on Parliament Street, just north of Carlton, as part of their annual food drive.

In our third year of caroling, we were interviewed by Joe Coté, host of the morning show at that time.

Over the years the core group has stayed the same with new voices and new carols added to the songbooks. At first we lit our way by holding candles, but we forgot to calculate the wind factor. Through subsequent years we have added flashlights, candles in plastic cups, candles in paper cups, (not recommended) and the latest addition was the Canadian Tire "snake light".

The procedure is always the same. Some days before the evening event, the people in charge of hosting it deliver flyers along the "song route" and ask residents to have canned or dry goods ready for pick-up or to just hang a bag on their door knob for us. On the given evening we set off from the host house with our songbooks, lights (or candles), cheery hats, tambourines and bells, and of course, our trundle buggies. The haul is usually impressive; the singing less so. There are times when we actually all sing the same carol, at the same time. When this happens, we all congratulate each other and move on to the next house!

As we stop in front of each house, the singers sing and the collectors ring doorbells and bring goodie bags back to load in the buggies. We often encounter children. so the songs are about Rudolph, Santa, Frosty or not pouting! When we see a dog, we spontaneous burst into a rather loose rendition of "How much is that doggie in the window?" For Jewish homes we do a very poor version of "Hava nagila"

Each year the collection of canned goods has increased as residents have come to expect our visit. The beneficiary of this neighbourly

good deed has become St. Peter's Church on Carlton after CBC radio moved to their new location out of Cabbagetown.

And we do accept cash. One year a film crew wanted us to be quiet during their shoot. We agreed, but only after negotiating a good price. From time to time, we stop cars and ask for donations to the cause.

In the past few years, we, too, have become "mobile" as one of the group, who has a van, now follows behind us to collect the bags and deliver the haul to St. Peter's.

So watch for us in the coming years, a few weeks before Christmas. We are a rather motley group of 20-25, meandering through the streets, songbooks in hand, and carrying a variety of lighting devices. We sometimes sing on key and sometimes the same carol; but we DO sing and have fun. It is definitely for a worthy neighbourhood cause.

Helen Coltrinari
Cabbagetown resident

What does the CPA do?

Founded in 1988 to encourage the preservation of the architectural integrity and historic character of Cabbagetown, the CPA does that and more. Here's what we do:

Heritage Preservation

- Review applications to Committee of Adjustment and the Ontario Municipal Board,
- Make submissions to regulatory bodies

Heritage Promotion

- Produce quarterly newsletter
- Produce special heritage displays
- Host CPA Night "Speaker Series"
- Manage "Walking Tour" program

Awards Programs

- "Restoration Awards"
- "Streetscapes in Bloom"

Community Events

- Forsythia Festival
- Cabbagetown Cabaret
- "Tour of Homes"

Special Long-Term Projects

- Heritage Conservation District
- Books on Cabbagetown Heritage
- "Cabbagetown People" program
- Cabbagetown/Regent Park Museum
- HCD street signs

Comments or feedback about this newsletter are welcome at cpa@cabbagetownpa.ca

www.steveyeates.ca

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Peter Lovering

Cabbagetown Preservation Association
422 Parliament Street
P.O. Box 82512
Toronto, On M5A 4N8
Tel: 416-410-4259
cpa@cabbagetownpa.ca
www.cabbagetownpa.ca



Newsletter design & illustration by Steve Yeates 416-531-5757



Cabbagetown People School Tours

Students from Riverdale C. I. and Nelson Mandela P.S., accompanied by their teachers and led by CPA guides, learn about local history and the people who have created that history - part of the Cabbagetown People Walking Tour Program for Schools. Students work in pairs on answers to a customized questionnaire passed out at the start of the tour, and discussion follows with their teacher back in the classroom.

Be a school tour guide.

Cabbagetown People is looking for volunteers. If you are interested in history, education – perhaps a retired teacher and you have Monday to Friday daytime availability, you may enjoy becoming a Tour guide for Cabbagetown People's Program for Schools.

Walking tours are offered to students during the months of May/June and September/October, take place in the mornings and early afternoons Monday to Friday, and are approximately one hour in length. Training is provided.



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Oak Street Reinvented

What remains of Oak Street sits north of Dundas and east of Parliament. Over the years it has undergone several significant transformations that form an important part of Toronto's history. In the 1790s, the government of Upper Canada selected 99-acres east of Parliament Street for residential and commercial use. The area was referred to as 'The Park', and by the early 1800s a number of small houses were strewn about it. Then during the 1840s and 50s there was a significant population growth when workers – many of them immigrants – were lured to Toronto by the coming of the railway and industrial expansion. Cabbagetown attracted people in part because it was close to several factories and workplaces.

Oak Street and surrounding streets were in reality a vibrant and healthy mix of income levels and cultures despite the mid to late 1800s' perception of poor living standards. Oak Street embraced many middle-class architectural styles, such as Georgian, Queen

styles would be replaced by 74-acres of new uniform housing and green space. Oak Street was first street chosen for demolition. The federal and provincial governments contributed a total of \$2.7 million, with a final cost to the city of about \$16 million. This funding was the first evidence of support from higher-level governments for public housing projects.

Architect J.E. Hoare's design included 1,056 low-level apartments and row houses to accommodate a mix of families and senior citizens. The Regent Park North development promised its new residents a family-centered open space filled with modern housing, pleasant landscapes, and limited vehicle access. Rent was to be established on a sliding scale, averaging 20% of monthly family income.

The first families moved in during March 1949. There was a sense of optimism and civic pride about Toronto's first large-scale public housing project and many local residents looked forward to their

Regent Park women continue to take strong leadership roles in various safety initiatives and community events, such as Storytelling in the Park and The Sole Support Mom's Group. Although the area has faced many challenges, most believe it is a vibrant and healthy community full of kinship and a fierce pride of place.

Regent Park is a community of communities, rich in diversity. Once again Oak Street and the surrounding streets are being re-invented, this time with a Jane Jacob's sensibility. Toronto Community Housing Corporation is revitalizing the area and between 2006 and 2018, it will be completely replaced with a mix of varied-income residences. The buildings of Phase 1 have been demolished and construction has begun on the first building at the northwest corner of Sackville and Dundas Streets. The demolition is a move forward for some, but for others it's a loss of identity and a place they call home. It remains to be seen how successful this second attempt will be.



Cabbagetown before Regent Park. Composite panorama © Dagda

Anne, and Bay N' Gable in addition to the workers' cottages. The homes had been maintained with pride but many families found it increasingly difficult to keep up their properties during the Great Depression of 1929–39. For example, some widows from the First World War were forced to convert their homes into boarding houses for transient people. However, on the upside the Depression and the Second World War created a very strong sense of community and mutual support among residents.

In the 1930s and 40s a growing interest in social welfare began in Toronto. It was decided to examine housing conditions in poor neighbourhoods and in 1934 a municipal committee was appointed. The subsequent Bruce Report identified the area as a so-called 'Bad Area'. Authorities recommended that it become the city's first official 'clearance site', although plans were delayed.

Support for urban reform in Toronto from 1942-1946 increased substantially. The public felt that the government should take responsibility for families living in poor conditions. They subsequently united to call for City Council to proceed with its former plans for publicly financed, low-rental housing. Some residents welcomed this while others argued that it was not the best choice for their neighbourhood. In 1947, the latter formed the Regent Park Ratepayers' Association (RPRA), which tried to get fair compensation for the sale of their houses slated for demolition; and an active role in the development process, such as representation on the Toronto Housing Authority board.

The Housing Authority of Toronto, established in 1947, eventually decided on a 'garden-suburbs superblock model' that had been used in parts of the United States. The existing mix of architectural

new life in Regent Park. However, Regent Park rapidly failed to deliver the promises so enthusiastically offered by politicians and some residents in the 1940s and 50s. It would have been more successful if mixed-use and mixed-income spaces had been used to link Regent Park with the surrounding neighbourhoods. Other problems were caused by a lack of road networks, community facilities, and commercial spaces, which affected security, safety, and effective crime prevention.

Despite promises of priority re-housing only half of the new units were occupied by eligible local families. They were either refused state-assisted housing, or they were denied it due to what government officials judged to be 'moral unfitness'. Also rates were far above the original proposals and promises of low rent. An undercurrent of mistrust developed, which continues today.

The 1940s enthusiasm for social welfare planning waned. The housing model used in Regent Park was questioned and in the 1950s City planners discussed different approaches to deal with the worsening crisis of poor Toronto neighbourhoods in general.

Several community and political groups were organized in the 1950s and 60s. The Regent Park Ratepayers Association worked to publicize important issues, such as fair housing prices and rental rates although they were unsuccessful in stopping the demolition of their area. The community's activism reached its height in the late 1960s. Residents protested against imposed government programs they considered inappropriate for their neighbourhood. Large portions of the activist groups were made up of women, as they were most often affected by high rental rates and unfair policies.

Oak Street Re-Invented is a partnership exhibition between The Cabbagetown/Regent Park Museum and Toronto Culture. Fiona Lucas, Museum Co-ordinator of the Mackenzie House Museum, Museum and Heritage Services says, "Visitors are still coming to see the exhibit, so it has done well for us." Museum and Heritage Services have requested that the CRP Museum allow them to run the exhibit indefinitely. It will be taken down on November 25th and re-opened May 1st, 2008. If you missed it the first time, there's still plenty of time to go in 2008. Parts of it will also be on display in the lobby of 51 Division starting December 1st, 2007.

Abridged, C. Moore-Ede



detail, demolition, 2006. © Dagda



detail, Regent Park in the 1950s. CTA f2028_it0002n

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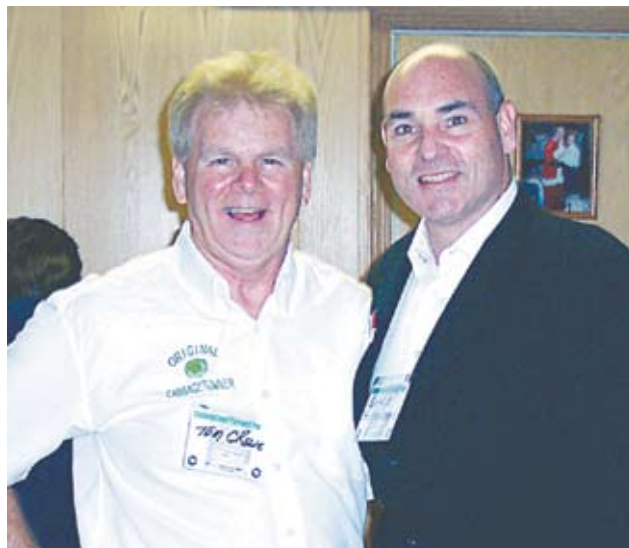
New construction © Dagda

800 "Original" Cabbagetowners Reunite



Tom Crewe is a former Cabbagetown lad whose father was the original Cabbagetown Santa Claus providing a remarkable service for children who had nothing. Tom continues this tradition annually with the Christmas Toy Party.

When Tom decided to throw a Cabbagetown Reunion party on September 15th the turnout was remarkable. Over eight hundred former residents gathered from across North America at St. Cyril's Church on Dundas Street. It was a great occasion to meet up with old schoolmates, swap stories and share



Tom Crewe and George Smitherman photos and memorabilia.

Tables were arranged with displays put on by the local schools. The CRP Museum also had a large display and provided the service of photocopying documents and photos for the attendees. Our six display boards attracted crowds of spectators with cries of "there's my Aunt Ethel!", "that's me

at the zoo with my brother: He's gotta see this."; "that's my dad's store", overlapped each other in happy succession.



By the evening the displays had been taken down and the room had been replaced with friends dancing to the resonating music. The place was packed and what was to have been a one-time event is planned again for next year.

Many of the original Cabbagetowners donated collections of photographs, artifacts and documents to the CRP Museum. Our list for oral histories has also grown substantially.



A special thanks to Tom Crewe for making this possible and sharing his Cabbagetown and that of his friends with us.

above and right: Connie Fenton & Kay Horitzny - Kay is the little girl in the photo in front of her father's shoe store

Auction makes Stapleton Exhibition a reality

The weather couldn't have cooperated more beautifully. Sunday, July 29th provided the perfect temperature and clear skies allowing for a delightful and entertaining evening in the back garden of the Lamb House.

Helen Coltrinari's and Gwen Adams' organizational skills had the event flowing smoothly and effortlessly. Friends and neighbours pitched in as bartender, servers and short-order cooks. All enjoyed excellent selections of wines and homemade finger food.

The items for auction were tempting – a night for two with breakfast at the Royal York, tickets to the COC and to Stratford, airline tickets, a \$200 gift certificate from former local businessman Harry Rosen, weekends at two separate cottages, and so on. In fact, there was a plethora of items and a cut-off time was called. All the un-auctioned items will be available at our next auction.

Auctioneer, Rick Schmitz amused his receptive audience with his auction repartee. Thanks to the generosity of those who bid, the CRP Museum raised over \$4,000. This allowed us to mount our upcoming exhibition, Bill Stapleton:

Drawing the Line, which will be open to the public on November 10th at the Riverdale Farm Residence."

Thank you to everyone who made this possible. Thanks to Sheila and Claus Schirmer for photographing the event.



Drawing the Line



The Cabbagetown/Regent Park Museum is pleased to announce its third exhibition: **Bill Stapleton: Drawing the Line** in partnership with Riverdale Farm.

Bill Stapleton, in his 93rd year, is still actively painting with a sure hand, sharp eye, and tremendous vigour. He sorely misses Cabbagetown where he was a resident for forty years. He was thrilled to be able to attend the opening of his artwork display on November 9th and check out the old 'hood. Bill was a familiar site in Cabbagetown and Regent Park and has been missed by many in the community since he moved to Bracebridge. His sketches and paintings provide a special record of the people and activities of this area over many decades. He uses his work as social commentary and prefers to use art to get across his messages. This he accomplishes from the simplest lines, to the dense overlaying of lines and ink wash. He also paints with strong vibrant colours and bold strokes, as forthright in his technique as he is to his social convictions.

Stapleton's work includes the humorous and whimsical; the exhilarating pulse and beat of musicians and dancers; the terror of war; the desperation of the homeless; and the innocence of children. Most arresting in the portraits are the eyes, which speak silent volumes.

We are extremely grateful to Ruth Armitage, Recreation Co-ordinator, for all her help. This exhibition was made possible by Riverdale Farm - Toronto Parks, Forestry & Recreation, which is generously providing the facility space. Also special thanks to those individuals who donated items and opened their pockets at the CRP Museum auction, which provided the funding for the framing and presentation of selected works from our Stapleton collection and to Daniel et Daniel, who generously catered the event. Without you it couldn't have been done.

The exhibition runs from **November 10 2007 to January 13 2008** at the "Residence" (down the path past the goats), Riverdale Farm. It will be open from **11-3 Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays**.



VOLUNTEERS are urgently needed to help staff. Volunteers are needed for two-hour shifts, 11-1 or 1-3. Please contact Laura Pink at cpa@cabbagetownpa.ca to volunteer for this special project.

Articles this page by C. Moore-Ede, CRP Museum. Reunion photos, courtesy of Connie Fenton.

See Beyond "House" ... to Appreciate "Home": Cabbagetown Tour



by PJ Wade

The success of home staging and other cosmetic make-overs, seems to indicate that buyers viewing a property may not know how to look beyond the surface to visualize their own lives and taste superimposed on someone else's personal space. Buyers may benefit from making a conscious effort to strengthen their visioning ability since the acquired skill of productive home viewing forms the basis for the significant financial decision -- to buy or not to buy.

The most important advantage in home buying lies in working from a clear personal definition of "home," not just the current "in" design dictates. As owners, buyers will live through many fashion waves. (Down the road, granite counters may prove to be the new shag rugs.) It's the "bones" -- the space and architectural elements -- of a house or condominium that really matter, not superficial and temporary elements like paint, furniture and decor.

Among the strategies that transform simply "seeing a house" into "investigating potential from the buyer's viewpoint" are the use of hands-on experiences like the Old Cabbagetown Annual Tour of Homes & Gardens. This tour, and others like it, allow consumers behind the front doors of homes that have proven themselves to be well adapted to the families that own them.

Home tours, popular in communities from Halifax to Vancouver, offer an insider view of how people who really love their homes and communities carve out functional, people-friendly environments from available physical space. These tours are not just about amazing decor. They emphasize the ingenuity of owners who, instead of being beaten by square-footage or an architectural challenge, find seemingly-endless ways to adapt their houses and condominiums to their personal needs and lifestyles, without compromising what is really important to them. The Old Cabbagetown Tour of Homes & Gardens, often celebrated for its contrasts of ultra modern and restored Victoria interiors, offers inspiringly-practical examples of how to maximize space and how to think outside the box of 19th and 20th Century room layouts.

"People have had to be very clever when they move into this neighbourhood," said Helen Coltrinari, a member of the Tour Organizing Committee, which selects the magic mix of grand Victorians and tiny cottages, loving restorations and modernized stunners that showcases owner innovation. "For owners, it is 'How can we use the whole space?' We try and show people on the Tour that this is history being lived in If people see something that is unusual or to their liking, they want to be able to contact the contractor. We feed off each other a lot and I think that is what renovation is all about."

Over its 29 years, the September Tour has welcomed well over 30,000 visitors through Cabbagetown doors. Tour proceeds help fund local community-enrichment groups such as the Cabbagetown Preservation Association.

If tour visitors enter a home so different from their own that they remark, "I would never want to live here," Coltrinari explains that "they are gently reminded that they don't live there, and that the owners are sharing their adventure in creating their own unique personal environment, not neutralized, ready-to-sell real estate. Each property is celebrated as a snapshot of the family's ongoing love affair with its home.

Taking a home tour can help buyers learn to identify a property's distinctive features -- bonuses and challenges. When it's time to house hunt, buyers then have some experience imagining rooms with different functions, furnishings and colour schemes. For instance, two adjacent Victorian row houses, with almost identical exteriors, delighted this year's Tour visitors with the contrast between the antique-filled classic and its mirrored, modernized "twin." Same space, different visions and a wonderful, practical demonstration of imagination.

Cabbagetown Tour properties can be excellent examples of approaching space from different perspectives to help buyers appreciate true potential and the power of win-win design compromises.

"In an era when most homes have three or four bedrooms, our house is not grand, but it is a unique and interesting property," said Tour participant Beverly Conquest, co-owner of a Georgian-style, one-bedroom cottage which ingeniously and comfortably houses her family of four. "What people have done about their homes is not always grand, but it is interesting -- baseboards, original hinges, an old bath that came with the house, interesting features and details."

Among the "interesting" features of their fascinating, deep-lot, 1860 home, is the under-the-eaves space which has been transformed into a colourful, amusing play and sleeping environment for the two children.

Experience teaches us how to go beyond "making do" to become adept at adapting space to our individual likes, dislikes and sense of proportion. The more a buyer knows about how to modify space, accommodate function and gain by compromise the more proficient a buyer becomes at seeing beyond cosmetic failings or hype to evaluate long-lasting value.

Mentally moving into a potential property is a valuable way to consider the fit. Committed Tour homeowner Julie White did not hesitate when asked what the main attraction of their current

1857 home was on first viewing seven years ago: "The front porch -- we visualized having one of those sliding porch chairs with a squeak, people going by and grandchildren running around this big family house."

That is precisely how the family has lived in their double veranda, Georgian-style restored beauty.

"I don't think a 'perfect place' has to do with size or fixtures," said White. "It has to do with putting your heart into it and being happy having your own home. That is very important."

When you view a potential home, what are you looking for? What are you looking at? Which visions does the property conjure up in its current state? Can you visualize it transformed into your personal space?

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The Tour of Homes

2008 will mark the 30th Anniversary of this Cabbagetown tradition. Mark your calendars for September 13, 14, 2008. Plan to attend this wonderful fundraiser for local charities. And watch this space for more details as the date draws near.

Streetscapes in Bloom 2007 Award Winner

The committee for the CPA Streetscapes in Bloom Award wishes to announce the 2007 winner: 5-7 Geneva Avenue. These two combined gardens delighted the committee with the variety of greenery and bloom throughout the growing season. The beautiful dahlias at the end of the season really helped put this garden combination over the top.



The certificate winners are the gardens in front of 262 Carlton Street and 409 Sackville.

Congratulations to all the gardeners who were nominated this year.

Award and certificates will be presented at the November 26 CPA night, Stonegrill Restaurant(see front page).

Nominations for the 2008 Award should be sent to Helen Coltrinari, Chair, Streetscapes in Bloom Committee, by May 30th. Call and leave a message at 416-923-6165 or email helenc.hmc@sympatico.ca

By popular demand, the SSB committee of the CPA will be organizing another "**Hidden Gardens and Secret Spaces**" tour for 2008. The date is Sunday, June 8th from 11:00 – 4:00. Tickets are \$10.00 each and the event goes on rain or shine. Reserve your tickets early as we almost sold out last year! Cabbagetowners love their gardens



Don Vale Cabbagetown Residents Association

the best place to live in Downtown Toronto

www.donvalecra.ca

Dear Cabbagetown Neighbour,

Summer is over and it's been a busy fall season already with the Cabbagetown Festival, the Tour of Homes, and another election campaign leading up to the Provincial Election on October 10. Since the AGM in May, the new board of the Don Vale Cabbagetown Residents Association (DVCRA) has been active on many fronts. We continue to work closely with the CPA and the Old Cabbagetown Business Improvement Area (BIA), to coordinate our activities for the betterment of our community. If you are not familiar with the DVCRA, please visit our web site at www.donvalecra.ca. If you are not already a member, we invite you to join and participate in this important neighbourhood association.

We are now well into our third year of rebuilding the Association and starting to see the impact of our combined voices working together to improve the quality of life in Cabbagetown. Here's a summary of some highlights in the Association's activities and important issues we are tracking:

Regent Park Development

Many members have contacted me through our website to ask about what is happening with the Regent Park development. Exciting things are happening south of Gerrard and we have been looking at the potential impacts (and benefits) to our members here in Cabbagetown. While the transition will take many years, there are very encouraging signs that the basis for a vibrant and healthy community is being formed on our southern perimeter. To get more information or to see the Regent Park revitalization webcam, visit www.regentpark.ca.

Through the summer, city planners held a series of Community Meetings to gather input and discuss plans for an \$11 million Aquatic Facility as well as the plan for parks and parkettes in the new development area. I attended several of these meetings and was impressed with the potential for world-class community facilities right next door and accessible to our Cabbagetown residents.

Cabbagetown Festival Arts & Craft Show

Our members on Sumach Street that live between Winchester and Amelia have been adversely affected by the flea-market vendors that showed up every year during Cabbagetown Festival and took up squatter positions beside the Necropolis. After careful consideration, the board approved an annual initiative to manage the space during the Festival for additional Arts & Crafts show vendors that were not able to get booths in the main part of the Park. Doug Rowlands, Jane Doherty and a team of volunteers took on the project and successfully filled the show with a variety of high quality arts & crafts vendors, significantly improving the Festival experience for the local residents. Kudos go out to Doug, Jane and the team for a fantastic first year effort!

Provincial Election Candidates Meeting

It was a busy week in September! On September 17, together with the Old Cabbagetown BIA and a number of our local residential organizations, we held an interesting and lively Candidates Meeting for the Provincial Elections at Sprucecourt Junior Public School. There was some good debate on important issues that affect our area such as the government's support for social services and eliminating panhandling.

Parliament Street Issues

There has been lots of activity on our "High Street" and we're glad to see our membership actively participating in many of these issues that have a big impact on our community. Most of you know about the survey we distributed earlier this year (in collaboration with the BIA) requesting your input on improvements to the streetscape and shopping on Parliament Street. Due to the overwhelming response, it's taken a lot longer than we anticipated to tabulate the results. We're now close to releasing the results of the long-awaited survey and we've been taking your comments to heart, working closely with the Old Cabbagetown BIA, Councilor McConnell's office as well as supporting our neighbouring associations on issues that affect us all such as the following.

Salvation Army Warehouse Mission

Earlier this fall, we informed you of the Salvation Army's plans to relocate the Warehouse Mission to Parliament Street. Thanks to your vocal opposition,

the efforts of Councilor McConnell and a group of local residents, the community was able to convince the Salvation Army that this was not a progressive development and they have abandoned the planned move to Parliament Street.

615/ 617 Parliament Street

Many members are letting us know that they are shocked by the continued operation of the derelict properties at 615 and 617 Parliament Street, just above Wellesley Street. Thanks to Councilor McConnell's efforts, the rooming house license has been revoked but there continues to be a parade of flagrant drinking, drug and prostitution activity at one of the most visible "Gateways" to Cabbagetown. Members have even told us that they are avoiding the bus stop at Wellesley and Parliament now because of this. If you want to voice your concern about this situation, please contact Councilor McConnell's office and let her know that this situation is not acceptable in our community (see our website for contact information and please copy us on any communication).

Starbucks at 492 Parliament Street

On a positive note, one of our neighbouring associations (AARG) has been carefully navigating an improvement to a highly visible corner at 492 Parliament Street, the site of a future Starbucks. Many residents were concerned about the development and a committee was established to ensure that Cabbagetown's community standards were maintained. A panel comprised of Cabbagetown architects and experts such as Alan Waterhouse, Rollo Myers, and Peggy Kurtin have worked with the AARG to endorse the project, noting that the building's owner invited, listened to, cooperated, and graciously incorporated community input and comments. Furthering the improvement of this specific locale of Aberdeen Avenue, the owner has agreed to public expropriation of the laneway, which the AARG Laneway Naming Committee proposed the City call "Cabbagetown Lane".

All of this activity and concern has reinforced the need for a comprehensive plan for Parliament Street, Cabbagetown's 'High Street', which we are committed to pursuing along with the Old Cabbagetown BIA and our neighbouring residents associations.

Norm Macdonald

We were saddened by the passing of Norman Hugh Macdonald earlier this year. Norm died at Fudger House on March 14, 2007, in his 88th year. He was a founder, director and treasurer of the original Don Vale Property Owners Association which was established in 1967 and incorporated in 1975. His vision and commitment helped form the basis for the Association as we know it today.

Sincerely,

Lee Garrison, President
Don Vale Cabbagetown Residents Association

Visit us on the Web at
www.donvalecra.ca



Check out the Program's latest feature, Cabbagetown Stories, which begins with the story of Aunt Polly and the Cabbagetown Store.

www.cabbagetownpeople.ca

Restoring Your Home?

Get City help with a Grant

The Toronto Heritage Grant Program is administered by the Heritage Preservation Services Unit of the City Planning Division to encourage the conservation of designated heritage properties in the City of Toronto.

The Toronto Heritage Grant Program provides grant funds of up to 50% of the estimated cost of eligible heritage conservation work to designated heritage properties. Owners of a property designated under Parts IV or V of the Ontario Heritage Act may qualify to receive a grant for eligible conservation work in either of the two project categories:

- 1: Residential house form buildings - Up to a maximum grant of \$10,000.00 for individual properties.
- 2: Commercial, institutional, multi-residential and industrial form buildings.

The Toronto Heritage Grant Program is part of the City of Toronto's Community Partnership Investment Program.

APPLICATION DEADLINE:

Monday, June 18, 2007 at 1:00 p.m.

<http://www.toronto.ca/heritage-preservation/grants/>

'08 CPA Restoration Award Call For Entries

If you have completed some significant construction to the front of your house or other building within the past two years, or expect to do so before April 1, 2008 you are probably eligible to enter CPA's Restoration Award Competition. We are looking for entries that enhance the streetscape of our community through an imaginative understanding of the scale, materials, and detailing that have made up the character of Cabbagetown over the years. Alternatively, where new buildings are involved, we welcome entries that are creatively modern in style, yet are sympathetic to their inner-city context.

Also, should you know of someone who has done an especially good bit of renovation work, please encourage the owner to apply or notify us and we will speak to the owner.

Submissions should include photographs and/or drawings showing the before and after conditions of the project, together with a brief written description of the work involved, the philosophy of the owner towards the work, and a bit about the process/history. The final date for submissions is April 1, 2008. Contact Rick Merrill at 416-924-2333 for details.

Events at Riverdale Farm

Nov 10 - Jan 14, '08

Drawing the Line, art by Bill Stapleton. 11-3 Thursday, Sat, Sun. "The Residence", Riverdale Farm. See p 4 for details.

Sun Nov 18 : 2.00- 4.00pm

Christmas Preview at the Shop at the Farm

Wed Nov 28: 7.00pm

Riverdale Farm Advisory Council Annual General Meeting and Election, Meeting House at the Riverdale Farm

Fri Dec 7: 6.30-8.00pm

Home for the Holidays at Simpson House 6.30-7.00pm
- tree lighting & carolling

Home for the Holidays at Meeting House 7.00-8.00pm
- country holiday craft, hot apple cider beside fireplace

Sat Dec 8 @9.30am-1.30pm

Home for the Holidays @ Meeting House
- carolling, cookie decorating, country holiday craft, holiday quilters craft, hot apple cider, stories beside the fireplace, visit with Santa, wool spinners



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A Tale of two Groceries part 1 of 2

This issue: the Cabbagetown Store, late 1800s

As part of its research, volunteers for the Cabbagetown/Regent Park Museum have been collecting oral histories. This is the first of a two-part series comparing two related histories.

The local Cabbagetown stores have provided superb insight into the people, times and traditions of this community. Often the strong driving forces behind such enterprises were women, who 'assisted' their husbands but in reality ran the show. Two such extraordinary women came to light through our Cabbagetown/Regent Park oral history project. One ran a store in the late 1800s and the other during the Great Depression of the 30s.

In the late 1800s 'Aunt Polly' ran the Cabbagetown Store, which was situated on the east side of Parliament Street just north of the corner of St. David Street and near to Regent Park School and the former Gay Theatre. Her nephew, Vern McAree [Cabbagetown Store, 1953] wrote wonderful descriptions of Aunt Polly and her husband, John Verner. One can imagine both them quite clearly. "Uncle John's manners were courtly, and what success the grocery store had, owed much to the suavity with which he greeted customers, literally bowing and scraping and rubbing his hands as he waited on them..He blustered somewhat, but a kinder man never lived. At bottom he was weak and leaned much on the quiet, almost demure, strength of Aunt Polly who was the real backbone of the business.



detail, Aunt Polly's House, Vern McAree standing on left.

It was she, not Uncle John, who took on the unpleasant duty of lying in wait for a customer considerably in default, and telling him in low tones, and using words that took the flesh from his bones, that he was a drunken scoundrel and had obviously planned to bring his family to disgrace and the store to bankruptcy. Oddly enough such outrageous charges never seemed to be resented and Aunt Polly could be depended upon to see that a growing debt was brought within bounds. I have turned white and shuddered when I have seen this little woman, in a voice not raised much beyond a whisper, talk to some hulking man in a way which to me seemed to place her life in jeopardy."

We learned a great deal about the store, the family and its customers from Catharine McKenty, Aunt Polly's great-niece. She explained, "My connection to Cabbagetown is through my great Aunt Polly and through the stories that I heard about her as a child from my mother, my grandmother and through the book that Vern McAree wrote. She was the heroine of that story."

Great-Aunt Polly was born in Ireland in 1837, the year that Queen Victoria came to the throne. Her family came to Canada during the great potato famine. At 17 she married John Verner, a promising young tailor and eventually they opened a grocery store. Aunt

Polly had very little education. She could read but mostly read the Bible, which was her great source of strength. She and John had no children of their own but one after another almost a dozen arrived on their doorstep and Polly took them in. Vern McAree was one of them and he came to live with Aunt Polly in 1882 along with his brother Colin, and his little sister Rebecca.

Catharine relates, "The store offered credit to men who were working down at the gasworks at the bottom of Parliament Street and were two weeks away from losing everything. They'd come home and stop off at the grocery store - provided they weren't waylaid at the tavern three doors down! One time the tavern keeper was destitute and was earning his living digging in the winter and he came to her store with bleeding hands and she gave him a pair of leather gloves. You know there was a sense of people looking out for each other."

It is a privilege to record these oral histories. They paint a vivid picture of a world set in the same geography but so different from today. As Catharine describes, "It always seems to me that to be part of a larger story makes all the difference. You know I can stand outside 283 Parliament Street, and there is Bob Bowery, the gaslighter coming down the street and the horse-drawn fire engine with the bugler announcing it as it hurtles down the sidewalk because the road's so rough. And Polly's father William Fleming was a carter, so that meant he had to go down to the bay with the other carters to fetch the water for the fire. Parliament Street at that time was made up mostly of cedar planks and every once in awhile one of those would disappear for firewood. And when they rented out the house to somebody the staircase on occasion would disappear for firewood too!"

"Outside that grocery store there was a wooden awning and under it a barrel of oysters, a cask of herring and some fresh red apples. Inside the front door were a big tub of butter and the



The store in later times. Cabbagetown Store, 283 Parliament St. Baldwin Room (Metropolitan Toronto Library), Ref no. 51-687

box of tea that Uncle John Verner would mix and he'd welcome everybody very graciously. And meanwhile Aunt Polly would make sure that people paid up their bill if they could."

The story of Aunt Polly exemplifies that breathtaking dimension off the human spirit, what people came through and yet were able to carry on with their lives. Catharine marvelled, "that's what amazes me the most. When I see Aunt Polly in the 1914 photograph at her 60th wedding anniversary in her 77th year, and I think of everything that she went to through - seeing a small child that she had adopted die of diphtheria in front of her



detail, Aunt Polly in her Irish lace veil

and her sisters, and just the sheer physical work, and to come through with that degree of serenity, to me that is life-giving."

There's a fierce pride of place for people who grew up in the original Cabbagetown. Despite all the negative associations with the area their roots run strong and deep and there have been many success stories on every scale. As Vern McAree wrote in Cabbagetown Store, "From this store, and members of the clan whose headquarters it was, there came in later years a Minister of Finance of Canada, a mayor of Toronto, a Speaker of the Ontario Legislature and a director of the T. Eaton Company, besides others of lesser celebrity."

Catharine McKenty has donated many photographs of Aunt Polly and the family from this period, as well as some of Aunt Polly's personal items, such as a cranberry glass jug inscribed with her name and her Irish lace veil, which she wore at her 60th wedding anniversary. She has also arranged for us to publish the



Catharine holding Aunt Polly's veil © Dagda

book CABBAGETOWN STORE online on our museum website (crpmuseum.com) with added commentary and photographs. We plan to have it available by the beginning of December.

Despite the dogged perseverance of Aunt Polly and John, the Cabbagetown Store eventually went bankrupt. As Vern observed, "But what was the breath of life to the small stores became, all too often, their death rattle. Credit made them and credit destroyed them. There was generally nobody in particular to blame. There was just the poverty that stalked most of the small stores' customers from the cradle to the grave."

by C Moore-Ede, CRP Museum

Next issue: Siegel's Groceria in the 1930s



CPA Membership/Volunteer Application

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There are many volunteer opportunities in the CPA. If you are interested check this line and we will contact you. _____

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Get to know your neighbours

We are also always looking for more CPA volunteers to join us in working on such committees as:

Heritage Walking Tours, Heritage Research, Cabbagetown Festival Booth, Forsythia Festival, Tour of Homes, Newsletter Delivery, Garden tours.

Duties may be for one event or ongoing. If you are interested, please contact: secretary@cabbagetownpa.ca