

Cabbagetown Preservation Association Newsletter

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Cabbagetown Festival — The Little Parade That Grew



Lila Orbach with children in costume in a parade many years ago.

If you want to know *anything* about the history of the Cabbagetown Festival, just ask Carl Orbach. A lawyer with a law practice on Parliament Street since 1955, Carl is an energetic extrovert who has spearheaded many campaigns to strengthen the vibrancy of Cabbagetown over the years.

Back in 1975, Carl and a few other Cabbagetown business owners launched a little community celebration that became an official festival in 1977. He recalls it vividly, "We had two pipers and two policemen on horseback, so they led the parade. And, behind them were all the children -- dressed up in costumes, and hanging on to a rope so they didn't fall by the wayside. After that, the adults went on a long pub crawl."

As the little parade was about to begin, Carl says someone asked him if he had a Parade Permit, so he swiftly pulled an old parking ticket from his pocket and said, "Here, here's the permit."

Never one to be stymied by bureaucracy, Carl went on to explain why it is now known as a "cultural" festival, "Because we needed money and the government was offering grants for cultural festivals. But, I suppose it truly is a cultural festival because Cabbagetown is so diverse."

The walls of Carl's office are covered with photos of festivals over the years. He points out numerous well-known special guests -- former Premier Bill Davis, Mayors David Crombie, June Rowlands and Barbara Hall, and Councilors Gordon Cressey and Pam McConnell.

Yet, it's the local "good sports" that Carl remembers most warmly -- the man who dressed up as the clown, the many business owners who created special events, and the numerous homeowners who agreed to open their homes for the house tour.

Sadly, many of the original festival pioneers have passed away, but the spirit lives on. Today, the Cabbagetown Cultural Festival has become one of Canada's largest outdoor community events. Its success is due to the many community volunteers and associations that work together to merge dozens of events into an elaborate 4-day event attracting visitors from far and wide.

Carl is still an energetic participant, still leading the parade and helping to lead the pub crawl. As one of the "fathers of the festival", he should feel very proud of the "Little Parade that Grew".

CPA Offers Cost-free Garden Design

Yes, membership *does* have its rewards. This fall, as enticement to join the CPA, one lucky supporter will win a garden design donated by award-winning landscape designer Wendy Boyle.

Wendy has been designing gardens for more than 15 years and especially loves designing small city gardens.

She says, "The challenge is that you must be very selective because space is limited -- and, of course, you must choose plants that will live in the constraints of an urban environment."

The winner of this prize -- valued at more than \$250 -- can elect a design for either a front or back

garden, and can play an integral role in the design process.

Wendy emphasizes, "In the initial consultation, we discuss the client's vision, personal preferences, and budget.

The design should reflect the homeowner's own personal tastes."

Everyone who is a member of the CPA before September 30th will be eligible for the draw at the CPA's fall meeting. It's just one *more* reason to join the CPA.

P.S. To join, see our Special Invitation on the back page.



Section of garden designed by Wendy Boyle

CPA Restoration Award '98—A Real Classic



"Even if you didn't know anything about houses, you could sense something was missing from the front of this one."

Owner Gord Kurtenbach



Restored house front with Victorian style front porch

Gord Kurtenbach never set out to win the CPA's annual Restoration Award. The award was just a delightful finish to a satisfying do-it-yourself project. He says the prize -- a watercolour of his house painted by artist Connie Johnson --- is really great. "In fact, it looks even better than the house," he quips.

When Gord bought 126 Spruce Street four years ago, he was a first-time homeowner and didn't know much about houses or construction, but says, "Even if you didn't know *anything* about houses, you could sense something was missing from this one."

So, Gord did what the CPA recommends to all Cabbagetown homeowners -- walk around the neighborhood and look at other houses. "On these walks, it struck me that front porches really make the front of a Victorian home. Thus, I resolved to add a roofed porch with porch posts, and turned wood stair railings."

"Given that I didn't have any experience designing Victorian porches, I decided to find a house that had similar proportions to my house and a beautiful porch, and simply copy it. I'd always thought the porches on 344 Carlton Street were beautiful -- and fortunately for me, the house had similar proportions to mine."

After a knock on the door of 344 Carlton, Gord met owner Terry Helmer who was very helpful. For example, Gord had sensed that "the proportions of things like the posts, railings, and the general height of the porch were critical in making it match the front of the house." Terry explained that most ready-made posts and railings are not the right scale for Victorian houses, and gave Gord the name of a person who could custom-make these items.

Custom-made posts! Wouldn't that be costly? Not according to Gord. "It was no more expensive than ready-made, and I got exactly what I wanted." Actually, given that Gord -- with help from many friends -- did the labour, the whole project wasn't

too costly. It just took time, and lots of thought and research.

Gord emphasizes that "a lot of folks around Cabbagetown helped me out. Gord and Pat Bailey gave me lots of advice on construction and design. George Armstrong gave me a great article on how to build porches to last. My friends George Fitzmaurice and Ravin Balakrishnan helped me with a lot of the construction and painting."

Once the porch was done, Gord decided to replace the front door and searched high and low to find just the right door. "Ironically, I finally found one nearby at 'The Door Store'. It had wood detail that would match the iron work detail on the porch. Unfortunately, this detail was buried under at least seven coats of hard enamel paint. I painstakingly stripped the paint and repaired and re-sized the door. I fretted endlessly about how to paint the door to highlight the detail; but, I must admit, after all the work was done, I was pleased with the result."

Next, he added a curved brick walkway and rock-face stone retaining wall. Finally, to further enhance the front of the house, "my girlfriend planted a perennial garden, and we added a birch tree we hope will grow tall to accent the height of the house front."

He says that "in the future, I hope to add some gingerbread trim to the gables and an iron fence. There's certainly plenty of house fronts in Cabbagetown to get more ideas from!"

Restoration Awards '99

Since 1992, the CPA has offered this annual award — a watercolour of the recipient's home — to encourage restorations in keeping with the Victorian character of the area. Look around for homes to nominate — or nominate your own. Deadline is April 1, 2000.

Contact Chris Howard, 962-7398.

From the Archives

This year, Winchester Public School celebrates its 125th anniversary. This photo engraving, published in 1901, shows the original bell tower which was likely later damaged by lightning — a common occurrence then, as bell towers were made of wood.

Winchester is Cabbagetown's only surviving Victorian-era school building that is still used as a school. Renowned former pupils include actor Walter Houston and artists Fred Brigden and C.W. Jefferys.

Anniversary celebrations will be on October 23rd. Anyone wishing to attend or help plan the festivities should contact the school at 393-8587.



Photo-engraving courtesy of Sesquicentennial Archives & Museum, Toronto Board of Education

CPA News

Welcome Aboard the Board

At the CPA's annual general meeting, three new members were elected to the Board. Kathy Farrell is Secretary and Sheila Schirmer and Fran Walsh are members. President Peggy Kurtin offered thanks to the retiring members.

Update: "Heritage District"

The designation of the Metcalfe area as a Heritage Conservation District presents a great opportunity for residents to get involved in a unique project. The Steering Group is asking for volunteers to gather history on the 207 homes in the area.

In September, volunteers will be given a training session by staff members of Heritage Toronto, and then permitted to conduct research at City Archives during weekdays. As 44 houses in this historic area have already been "listed", much data is easily available. It's a rare chance to learn how to explore City Archives. Call Peggy Kurtin at 967-6432.

The Study's Steering Group includes representatives from each street in the district: George Rust-D'Eye (*Sackville*), Lynne Wilson (*Salisbury*), George Keirstead (*Metcalfe*), Mary Rose Daigle (*Amelia*), Katherine Ashenburg (*Carlton*), Peggy Kurtin (*Winchester*) and Ilone Eurchuk (*member-at-large*). Other members are: Marissa Williams (*Heritage To-*

ronto), Ann Stanley, (*Board of Heritage Toronto*), Laurie Martin (*City Planning Department*) and Bonnie Dew (*Councilor Pam McConnell's office*).

On August 9th, at the project's first meeting, the group discussed the purpose and objectives of the study, defining the historic and present character of the area, the vision for the district and long-range historic plans for all of Cabbagetown. A meeting is being planned for homeowners in the area to provide their input.

Pushing the Boundaries

When the CPA was formed in 1988, it included only the Donvale section of Cabbagetown-- the area east of Parliament, running north from Gerard to St. James Cemetery. Yet, over the years, the CPA has been involved in historical matters west of Parliament and membership has grown to include many residents west of Parliament. At the annual general meeting, members approved the Board's proposal to expand the boundaries to include Winchester Park — the area within Carlton, Parliament, Wellesley and Bleecker streets. The Board now includes three members from this area.

Walking Tours Take a Turn

Under the guidance of Marijan Bayer, the popular CPA walking tours are

taking a new turn at this year's festival. Each tour leader will take groups to different sections of Cabbagetown rather than follow one single itinerary. Tours leave from the CPA booth at the gate to Riverdale Park, departing every 15 minutes on Saturday, September 11th (11 a.m. - Noon and 2 - 3 p.m.) and on Sunday, September 12th (1 - 2 p.m.).

Update: Plaques

A CPA member suggested that we provide historical plaques to date houses in the area. Great idea, but we learned they would cost about \$80 each — beyond our means. We're looking for creative fundraising ideas. Any ideas? Contact Peggy Kurtin, 967-6432.

Macedonians to Tour Area

George Rust-D'Eye's book, *Cabbagetown Remembered*, mentions that many Macedonians lived in this area. So, when the Macedonian Patriotic Organizations of Canada and the United States hold their 78th annual conference in Toronto, a Cabbagetown tour is a featured attraction. It's on September 4th at 2 p.m. Contact Larry Koroloff at 467-1629.

The CPA newsletter is edited by Kathy Farrell. Any story ideas or comments from readers are welcome (966-0493).

It is distributed to Cabbagetown homes by volunteers coordinated by Ray Barton

CabBits — A Few Tidbits of Cabbagetown Historical Trivia

What Cabbagetown home was owned by one family from 1830 to 1972?

156 Winchester. First owned by Peter Lamb, it was a country home, a frame cottage with a long, narrow driving shed. Son Daniel Lamb had it rebuilt into the present brick home in readiness for his marriage to Eliza Lumbers in 1867. After Daniel's death in 1920, the house sat empty, but fully furnished for fifteen years. It was then rented and sold in 1972.

From the *York Pioneer*, Spring 1976, Vol. 71, No. 1

Note: The Lamb family was influential in the early development of this area. Peter founded the P.R. Lamb Manufactory, a glue and stove black factory located on the land that is now south Wellesley Park. Daniel was responsible for the development of Riverdale Zoo (now Farm), Rosedale Valley Road, and other civic engineering innovations.

Where is the Witch's House?

384 Sumach. This is the "quintessential" Victorian home, complete with gingerbread trim, Victorian porches, numerous keystones and other bric-a-brac. It has been lovingly restored by the present owner Rollo Myer. Note the exquisite fence that Rollo has recently installed and painted — complete with classic gold trim. No one seems to know why it's called the "Witch's House". If you have any ideas, let us know.

Who wrote the novel *Cabbagetown*?

Well-known Canadian author Hugh Garner.

Dig This!

by Wendy Boyle, Be-leaf Landscape Design

Although some gardeners think autumn is restricted to raking leaves, this is not true. Fall is the perfect time to give your garden a head-start on next spring's growth.

Planting in fall has many advantages - especially after a hot summer. The ground will retain its heat for many weeks, creating an ideal climate for planting nursery stock and dividing perennials. As plants prepare for dormancy, top growth diminishes and energy is redirected to root growth, a process further encouraged by warm soil. Fall planting also gives your plants a "settle-down" time, so that they can begin their spring growth cycle as if they'd never been moved.

Ontario-grown nursery stock is the best choice for our backyard. Fall's cool temperatures create ideal conditions for farmers to dig up stock -- particularly conifers such as junipers, cedars and yews.

Perennials such as lilies, coneflowers and peonies can be divided in the fall; but, remember, they should have abundant top growth and at least 2 or 3 years in their present location.

Fall is the best time to prepare your beds for next spring's growing season. I recommend laying a few inches of manure over the beds in the fall -- don't dig it in. By just laying it on, the manure gradually works its way down into the soil, and in early spring -- long before you can tend the garden -- your plants will be receiving an early treat of the nutrients they need for healthy growth.

For fall clean-up, I believe "less is best". I rake up the first drop of leaves in mid-October, but allow the rest to serve as natural insulation, particularly over perennials. Two to four inches is ideal.

As for cutting back perennials, I advise gardeners to wait until spring (unless they are diseased or flower heads have gone to seed). It's important to allow the energy to fully drain back to their roots as this is the source of next year's growth. It also allows new gardeners not yet familiar with their plants to easily locate perennials that might otherwise be mistaken for weeds and pulled out in the spring.

So, this fall, don't be afraid to dig into some serious gardening. It's a second chance to get your hands dirty with Mother Nature all over again.

CPA Board of Directors

Peggy Kurtin, President 967-6432
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CPA Office Phone: (416) 410-4259; Fax: (416) 967-9728

Membership Invitation: RSVP Required

Your support is critical to the financial health of the Cabbagetown Preservation Association. Your membership fee, along with revenue from sales of our books, t-shirts, mugs and other items, is our main source of funding. Please help us to help preserve the historic character and charm of Cabbagetown.

Please mail or drop off your support to Ted Gzebb at 292 Sackville Street, Toronto, Ontario M5A 3G2.

One Year \$10.00 _____ Name _____
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Membership is June 1st to May 31st. Postal Code _____ Telephone _____