

Cabbagetown Preservation Association Newsletter

February, 2000

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CPA to Host Heritage Week Event on February 24th

The Cabbagetown Preservation Association is hosting a pleasant and informative community get-together to celebrate Ontario Heritage Week this month.

The event will feature well-known speaker, author and columnist Mike Filey. As a special pre-program "warm-up", the evening will also include an informal "Munch & Mingle" before the program. It's all being held at the newly renovated Winchester Pub — site of the historic Lake View Hotel, built in 1888 and then described as "one of the pleasantest public resorts in the East End of the City."

There are many reasons you won't want to miss this event. The "Munch & Mingle" — from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. — will give you an opportunity to enjoy a light bite and quaff before the main program. It's a chance to meet fellow Cabbagetowners — catch up with old friends, and make new acquaintances.

Keynote speaker Mike Filey's talk and slide presentation will give you insights into Cabbagetown's unique past. Mike Filey has written more than a dozen books on various facets of Toronto's past and for 20 years has contributed a popular column, titled "*The Way We Were*", to the Toronto Sunday Sun newspaper. We are fortunate he has agreed to help us celebrate Heritage Week.

In addition, two resident "historical buffs" will share their discoveries about our fascinating history. Alan Waterhouse will speak about the developer who built ten houses on Parkview Avenue. Sally Gibson will speak about the church which was on the southwest corner of Winchester and Sackville and the houses that replaced it.

Mark the date in your calendar. It's February 24th: Munch and Mingle at 6:30, program at 7:30. Winchester Pub, southeast corner of Winchester and Parliament. Entrance on Winchester St., 2nd door from Parliament (i.e. east door).



This drawing of the historic Hotel Winchester by artist John Coburn is available as a postcard from the Cabbagetown Preservation Association. After decades of neglect, the building was recently purchased and revitalized by owners Jim and Gus Petsis. It was a major and costly undertaking, for which the Petsis brothers deserve much credit. In 1999, they were awarded the Chairman's Award for Best Business Improvement by the Old Cabbagetown Business Improvement Area.

Cabbagetown's "Festival of Lights" Warms



One of many houses lit up by this season's first annual "Festival of Lights". Photograph provided courtesy of resident photographer Brian Summers.

Hats off to Christopher Dew and Daniel Dochylo who had the vision and tenacity to initiate Cabbagetown's first "Festival of Lights".

The whole festival added tremendous warmth to the neighborhood. The homes that were decorated for the official festival tour were stunning. As well, the many other homeowners who were inspired to light up their homes for the occasion helped make all of Cabbagetown a sparkling delight.

Despite the cold, the first Walking Tour attracted a good turn-out of about 40 people who enjoyed the novel tour in December.

A small cadre of volunteers contributed significant amounts of time and money to help make the event such a success. The CPA offers a big thank you to all the people who helped make it happen. We look forward to next season.

CPA News

Heritage Conservation District

The Heritage Conservation District (HCD) study is moving along well. The area includes the whole length of Metcalfe Street, and the sections of Amelia, Salisbury and Carlton Streets from the lanes running parallel to Parliament to the west side of Sackville Street.

Three mornings a week, a group of CPA members work at the Toronto Archives and the Land Registry office to research each and every house in the area. A photograph and an architectural description must be added to each listing — a process we hope will be completed in the next month. Then a report on the study must be written and presented to Heritage Toronto and the City. Before these presentations take place, a meeting will be held to share the results of the research and to give you another chance to discuss the HCD.

Now, we need a couple of volunteers to input this data onto a computer. After the last newsletter, a member called and offered to work on some of it, but I lost the name. My apologies!!! Could this person please call me again? As well, I'd love a few more volunteers. At least one of the computers should be compatible with Microsoft Word.

Once this project is completed, CPA plans to start working to help make the whole of Cabbagetown a Heritage Conservation District.

Peggy Kurtin 967-6432

Riverdale Farm Update

As we all know, there was terror in Cabbagetown for the first few weeks in January. The parks department "suggested": that Dolly and Bella and the other large animals might be sent to the country for the winter. Many hundreds of people including school officials phoned and sent e-

mails, faxes, and letters to Mayor Lastman. Councillor Pam McConnell contacted the senior Parks people as well as Riverdale Farm staff. There were half a dozen articles in major newspapers. I've even spoken to a family who appealed directly to the Mayor at his Jan 1 Levee.

The January 19th farm advisory group meeting to discuss this idea drew over 300 people to the Farm's meeting house. Not only people from Cabbagetown but people from all ends of Toronto flocked to the meeting. The walls of the meeting house were papered with protest posters made by local school children. At that meeting, Sandy Straw, the new area manager for Parks, announced that her department has agreed to keep the Farm's budget the same as last year. The animals won't be moved out. She also assured us that this wouldn't become an annual fight to save the animals and/or the farm staff.

However, because many people were left with the feeling that we are running from one crisis to another, a new organization called "Friends of the Farm" is being formed. It will have a broader community involvement in farm issues. "Friends of the Farm" will stay in touch with budgets and other priorities and become involved when needed. This group may buy a cow for the Farm, plant gardens, run a children's program or raise funds for items that the city will not provide. But above all, they will provide community feedback on all issues. Watch for signs on telephone poles and lampposts to find out how to join and participate.

Peggy Kurtin, 967-6432

Police Report

June Rowlands, the CPA's representative on the Community Police Liason Committee, reports that a recent community survey on security and safety was helpful in bringing

about changes in local police surveillance in our neighborhood.

Central Field Command Drug Squad has been assigned to 51 Division, until further notice. It was recognized there is an urgent need for greater police presence on our streets. In December, additional officers were scheduled to be assigned to 51 Division, and it was intended that no 51 Division officers would be assigned to other areas of the city until further notice. As well, a site for the new 51 Division station has been approved.

Forsythia Festival Gears Up

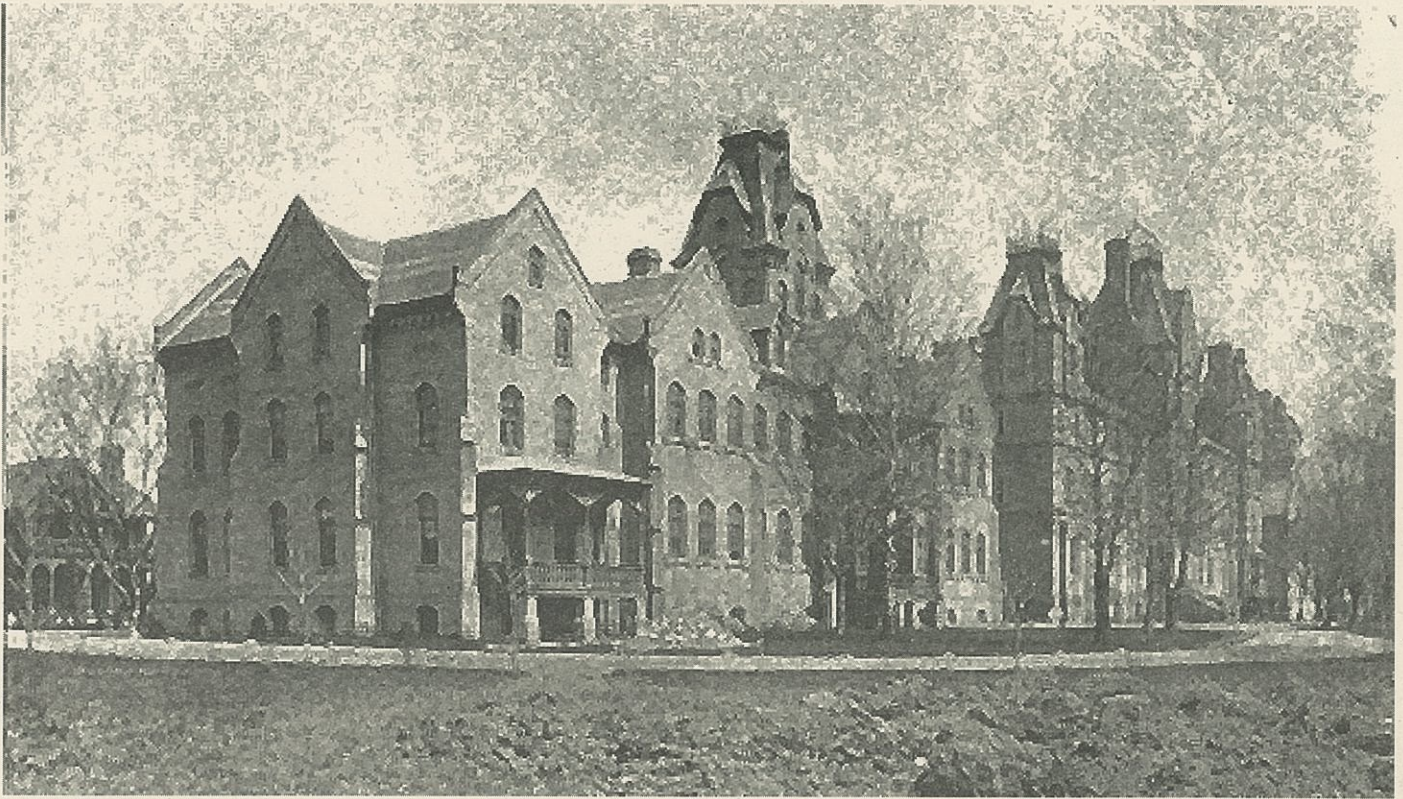
The annual Forsythia Festival has a new Chairperson this year. She is Kim Morton, an event planner by profession. The planning committee is considering adding some new events to this annual festival to be held on Sunday, May 7th. The committee would love to have some volunteers to help out, mainly on the day of the event. Kim promises the responsibilities won't be too onerous. Give her a call at 413-0882.

Cabbagetown Ranked #1 in Toronto Life Survey

The recent Toronto Life real estate guide ranked Cabbagetown #1 on their "Quality of Life Index" for the downtown area. The Index looks at many factors, but here's an excerpt: "The streetscapes remain nostalgically evocative (watched carefully by the ferocious Cabbagetown Preservation Association)...etc. We never thought of ourselves as "ferocious", but it's nice to know someone's listening!"

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 (929-6388).



Cabbagetown's Pioneer "Health Sciences Complex"

From the Archives

by John Court, CPA Board Member

Have you wondered why the houses in the area of Spruce Street south to Gerrard, and Sackville east to Sumach — including Gifford Street and Nasmith Avenue — seem not as old as the Victorian residences elsewhere in Cabbagetown? Those homes were not built until after 1922 when a major hospital facility occupying four acres was demolished. The above photo of the facility was published by G. Mercer Adam in 1891.

This hospital complex was not exactly the city's first medical facility, but rather a "descendant" of the first. The first hospital was Toronto General Hospital (TGH), opened in 1817 at King and John Streets. The medical complex in the above photo was also Toronto General Hospital, built on the second of three TGH sites. The above facility served Toronto from 1856 to 1913

Designed by prominent architect William Hay, it was, as CPA member George Rust-d'Eye notes in his definitive local history, *Cabbagetown Remembered*, "a huge four-storey 'castle' with five imposing towers along its 170-foot façade. The central tower was 100 feet high. Both it and the rest of the building were surmounted by a high mansard roof. It was a stately building of white brick with stone dressings, designed in the fifteenth century English domestic style."

As our first teaching general hospital, TGH ushered in a host of that era's medical innovations. In 1905 the superintendent abolished the tradition of living in a part of the hospital, making his former residence available the following year, with modest alterations, for the first public general hospital psychiatric unit in Canada.

The hospital complex already included several specialty units housed separately, including by 1881 Canada's second nursing school. Nearby medical institutions included the Trinity College Medical School (1871) at 37 Spruce Street, now preserved as condominiums, the Ontario Medical College for Women at 289 Sumach (1890) and Dr. John Rolph's Toronto School of Medicine on the southwest corner of Sackville and Gerrard.

From 1903 the hospital board began to pursue the need for a more contemporary facility — one that would also be closer to the merged medical schools on the university campus. In April 1911 the Governor General, Earl Grey, laid the cornerstone for the new College Street structure. Four days later the medical school Dean, Dr. C.K. Clarke resigned as medical superintendent of the provincial psychiatric hospital on Queen Street West to take up the comparable post at TGH. The Gerrard Street hospital, closed in 1913, was used intermittently for military purposes until demolished in 1922.

Dig This!

By Wendy Boyle, Be-leaf Landscape Design

Today, the classic Victorian garden is experiencing a revival — especially in Cabbagetown. As several people have asked me ‘Exactly what is a Victorian garden?’, this column will offer some historical background.

It was during the Victorian era that popular interest in gardening really exploded. Various social and economic changes brought increased leisure time — time that people could devote to gardens and lawns.

The perfect lawn was a sign of wealth and prosperity, an “outdoor parlor” of sorts. Today, we recognize that the perfect lawn is very much overrated. From gas powered lawn mowers polluting the air, to the fertilizers and herbicides altering the soil content, lawns are high maintenance and not environmentally friendly.

Back to what makes a Victorian garden. Trees played an important role in the design and practicality of gardens. Trees were placed near houses to shade rooms from direct sun, during the long summer months. They were also often used to frame entrances into private laneways and to line streets, giving a stately impression. Shrubbery was used also for defining property borders and pathways.

Exotic imported plants became very fashionable. At times, they were used as lawn decor, but more often they were kept in conservatories, feeding a sort of collector-mania which had spread throughout Britain.

Fencing, particularly cast iron, was a strong design element. The more lavish the home, the more lavish the fencing and gate work. Although some wood fences were used for informal dwelling, picket fences were generally hidden with vines or shrubs, as this style of fencing was apparently a real “no no” in the Victorian period.

Fencing was just one of many ornaments used in Victorian gardening. Sculptures, sundials, fountains, bird baths and gazing balls all added to the outdoor decor and aesthetics of a proper Victorian garden. Urns were used to frame doorways or staircases but were often left empty, simply making a statement on their own.

Outdoor seating arrangements played an important role in these “outdoor parlors”. Arbors, benches, pavilions and gazebos were commonly used and were designed to reflect the architecture of the homes. The delightful interplay between the architecture and the garden details is what has made the Victorian style so endearing and sought after, even today.

With Cabbagetown having so many Victorian styled homes, I encourage people to take a good look at the original architecture and repeat it the layout of their garden, particularly in the front yard.

Last but certainly not least to consider are the plants. Two planting styles developed during the Victorian era. “Carpet bedding” used plants of the same height to create intricate mosaic patterns, such as the floral clock displayed in Niagara Falls. The more natural “herbaceous border” used plants of various heights, placing the tallest at the back to create a downwards slope to the shortest in the front of the bed. This style is often seen in the “English country gardens” that have been all the rave over the last few years.

Many plants that were used then are favorites still today: roses, peonies, asters, both tuberous & fibrous begonia, campanula, coleus, dianthus, ferns, impatiens, morning glories, pansies, petunia, periwinkle, alyssum, snapdragons and all sorts of vines, which in every Victorian garden was a *must*. Remember, plants do not occupy space, they define it!

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CPA Membership Application

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

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