

# Community

## The village of Meadowvale

*It's the kind of place where change is a dirty word*

By MARY LOUISE BIRKS  
Times staff writer

**F**ar from the traffic tie-ups at highways 5 and 10, the crush of shoppers at Square One and the QEW's incessant roar sits the pastoral village of Meadowvale.

On quiet sidestreets, village residents are disturbed only by the distant rumble of trucks passing on Derry Road West. In the solitude the villagers' gardens seem more bountiful than their neighbors south of the 401, the grass greener and the birds' songs sweeter.

Old Meadowvale, nestled at the intersection of Derry Road West and Second Line West, hasn't changed much since the turn of the century.

New homes have sprung up around the old, aluminum siding covers the original rough cast or frame walls of others and no trace remains of the earliest historical structures. But the village can't shake its mantle of peaceful, old-fashioned charm.

Few, if any, in the village want that to change. Great pains have been taken by the 250 residents and the city to preserve the village's historical character. Together they've devised a heritage conservation plan which, once approved by the province, will mean significant changes to the exteriors of the homes can't be

made without the approval of a resident-dominated review committee.

The charm is what attracted both the old and new residents to the village. Here the neatly trimmed and manicured yards reflect the pride homeowners feel about being part of the village magic.

In the hour or so it takes to walk the winding narrow laneways past houses set well back from the street amid tall shade trees, it's easy to envision the past. You don't even need to close your eyes to imagine what life was like when Louise Southern was small.

Louise Southern, who has lived most of her 68 years in the village, says proudly, "It is the best place in the world to bring up children."

She lives here for simple reasons. "I like to have the garden and to have some land... and I like the fresh air," says the sprightly grandmother, who credits the fresh air for the longevity of village residents.

Mrs. Charlie Gardner perhaps the oldest living resident in the village at 92 was born in the 120-year-old house Mrs. Southern's father bought in 1921.

Fifteen years ago Mrs. Southern knew everyone in the village by name. That changed with the influx of new families. The newcomers haven't detracted from the village's community spirit one bit,

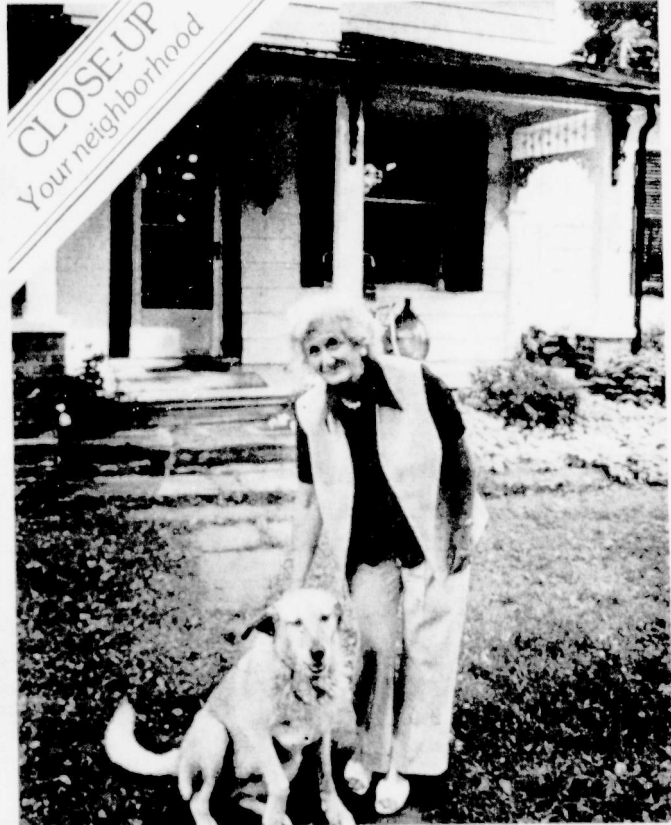
she says. Once a villager always a villager.

Meadowvale isn't the birthplace of movie stars or prime ministers, but local celebrities are recorded faithfully in the Women's Institute's Tweedsmuir History of Meadowvale — like Fred S. Haines, Edwin Thurston and George Chavignaud, artists who painted the village at the turn of the century; Andrew Crozier, a local boy who composed a national anthem in 1901 that was never used; and Ernie Martin, who until a few years ago worked as the village blacksmith for almost 50 years.

The original village predates Confederation by almost 50 years. In 1819, 29 Irish families emigrated to the area from New York City, making their living harvesting white pines. Lumber was behind the village's growth to 250 people by 1836. In the 1860s Meadowvale boasted a larger population and more businesses than Brampton.

However, the CPR's decision to bypass the village, as well as depleted timber reserves and the advent of iron construction, spelled financial doom for the local sawmill industry. Today nothing remains of the mills which spurred the village's growth.

But people like Louise Southern and the rest of the village's residents are quite happy things turned out that way.



ROB BEINTEMA/THE TIMES

Louise Southern and Rascal like village life

## A walking tour can open the door to history

**A** walking tour of Meadowvale village can unlock the doors to history. Pack a lunch and finish off the walk with a picnic at the Credit Valley Conservation Authority (CVCA) grounds just north of the village on Second Line West.

Keep in mind that the homes you'll be seeing are private residences not meant for close inspection. You can see everything from the streets.

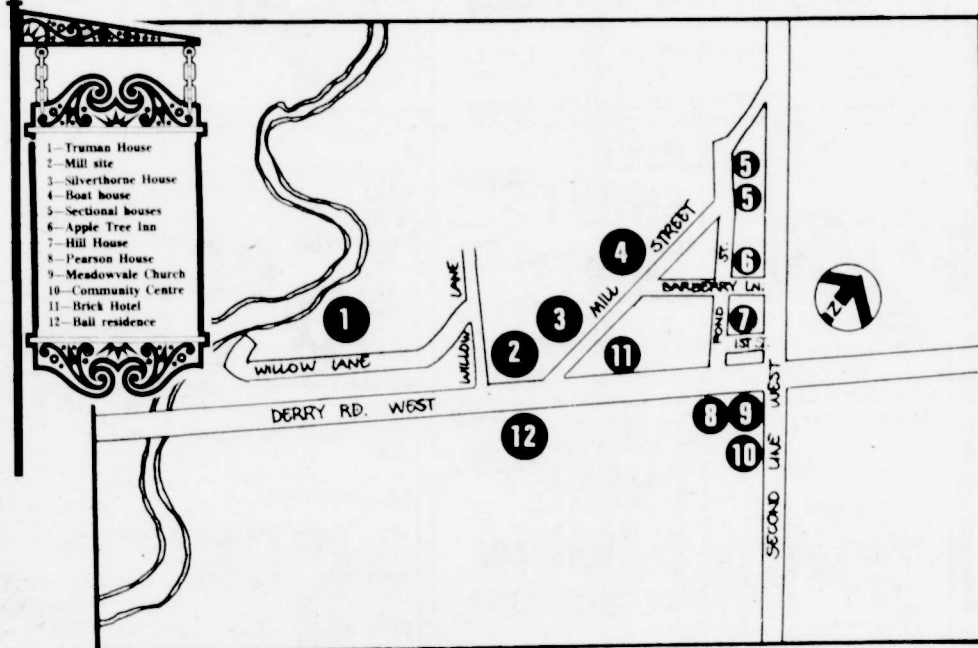
To reach the village, drive north on Highway 10 to Derry Road West and turn west on Derry Road. Turn north onto Willow Lane, the third street past Second Line. Cross the bridge and park in the laneway straight ahead.

That's the Southern House on the left. Two doors down Willow Lane and on the right is the Truman House, the oldest house in Meadowvale village, built before 1840.

Walk on the north side of Derry Road to the first street on the left, Mill Street. This grassy corner on the west side of Mill is the foundation ruin of the longest-standing mill in Meadowvale.

Walk north on Mill Street. The first house on the left is the old Silverthorne House, which now houses the CVCA administrative offices. The house originally belonged to the Francis Silverthorne family, owners of the mill. It was built in the early 1840s.

Walk two houses north on the left to the Old Boat House, which is also used by the CVCA. The building was the only boat house in Meadowvale, built about 1840 by



the Silverthornes, to store boats that once floated on the long-gone mill pond.

Cross to the east side of Pond Street, where you'll see two sectional houses. During the 1840s the dwellings housed mill workers and their families.

Walk south on Pond Street. Two doors down on your left is Apple Tree Inn, built in 1845. All that remains of the namesake apple tree is the bleached stump in the front yard. From 1922 to 1944 Miss

Yates and Miss Beardmore ran an English tea house there which was frequented, says Mrs. Southern, by an exclusive clientele of wealthy Torontonians. The second house on the left down from that is Hill House. The original owner of this house is unknown but it is one of the village's oldest homes, built between 1835 and 1845.

Cross to the south side of Derry Road and walk east towards the church. The house just before you get to the church is the Pearson House. Its first resident was

Thomas Graham, proprietor of the Gooderham and Worts store and a village postmaster. The 2½-story house was built in the 1870s. The department store he ran stood at the north east corner of Mill and Derry but burned down in 1907.

Next door is Meadowvale United Church, built by the Wesleyan Methodists in 1863.

Walk south on the Second Line to the Meadowvale Community Centre. It hasn't changed in 60 years, says Mrs. Southern, who

first attended public school there. The school house was built in 1871. The school house is the scene of one of the village's biggest controversies — the restoration of the Fred Haines mural. Haines painted the mural about 1900 on old roller blinds that hung across the front of the schoolroom. Eighteen feet long, it is an impressive mural depicting the life of the Mississauga Indians.

Restored at a cost of \$32,000 in Ottawa it now hangs in a Brampton art gallery, but the residents want it back. The original will hang in the Delta Hotel in New Meadowvale while a copy will hang in the old Boat House.

Walk back towards your car on the south side of Derry Road, stopping midway between Pond and Mill Streets. The middle building on the north side of Derry is Brick Hotel, built in 1852 by Mathew Laidlaw as a tavern and inn. Extensive changes have taken place inside and out.

On the south side of Derry Road, midway between Mill Street and Willow Lane is the Ball Residence. Built as a hotel in 1844 by village blacksmith George Ball, it was the first hotel in the village.

That wraps up the tour, but walk on down to the gas station to get full feel of what was once a thriving downtown. Don't forget to watch for clues for dates and names of buildings written in the sidewalk.

—BIRKS