

# Our own Rockwell had humble start

**O**n the dining room wall of our humble abode hangs a pen and ink drawing.

It's a framed sketch of what was once the Stouffville railway station.

The detail is so exact, you can count the shingles on the roof and the footprints in the snow.

Over the years, dozens of visitors, some of whom don't remember the structure, have gazed longingly at this treasured piece of local history.

It's priceless. The creator of this masterpiece is John Gregg Roberts of Stouffville. As so often was, and still is his practice, the drawing is a gift — from him to us.

Undoubtedly, others have been similarly honoured. Only 100 are known to exist. Ours is number 87.

John Roberts, 72, was born in Toronto and received his formal education at Northern Vocational School.

He admits to an in-class behavioral problem that, on occasions, prompted teachers to stand him out in the hall.

From watching the movie *Snow White*, he would draw facial features of the seven dwarfs on bits of paper. Sneezy was his favourite.

How was he or anyone to know that from this less than ignoble location would emerge an artist of such profound skill and ability?

A few years later, this somewhat obstreperous kid would distinguish himself as a gold medal graduate from a four-year course in art.

From there, Mr. Roberts commenced a climb up the ladder of success.

His first professional assignment was designing a uniform for the 1952 Grey Cup champion Toronto Argonauts. He also created the team's program cover.

In 1954, Mr. Roberts began an arts apprenticeship with the firm of Sherman, Laws and Parker Ltd. His first one-man show was a display of watercolours at the North Toronto YMCA.

Many displays have since followed including such sites as Imperial Bank of Commerce in Toronto, the Arts and Letters Club in Toronto, First Canadian Place and Gallery Gabor in Toronto, the McMichael Gallery in Kleinburg, Latham Gallery in Stouffville and more.

Mr. Roberts travelled south in 1960 and served as fashion and sports illustrator with Metro Matrix Services in New York and later an instructor in commercial art at Westport, Connecticut.

He would hold a similar position at Famous Artists Schools in Amsterdam, Holland.



**Roaming Around**  
with Jim Thomas

Over the years, Mr. Roberts has rubbed shoulders with many famous artists including the late Norman Rockwell and Robert Bateman.

"Norman Rockwell was always my idol," he said.

Four of his paintings hang in the White House at Washington and two hold places of distinction at 24 Sussex Drive in Ottawa.

He's the recipient of letters of appreciation from U.S. President George Bush and Prime Minister Stephen Harper.

It was while living in Newmarket that a friend suggested he try his hand at teaching high school art.

"I wanted to re-locate to a small town," he remembers, "and this brought me to a community called Stouffville."

At Stouffville District Secondary School, he was welcomed with open arms by then principal Bill Duxbury.

At the time, there was no real art course here, Mr. Roberts remembers. He initiated this in 1971 with 37 students.

Within a year, the work load had increased to such an extent a second teacher, Jane Warren, was hired.

Thanks to profound teaching skills, several of Mr. Roberts' protégées would later enroll in the Ontario College of Art and Design including Joanne Madill, Paul Grundy, David Clubine and Ron Lechtman.

Mr. Roberts taught art at SDSS for 23 years, then joined the staff of Alexander Mackenzie High in Richmond Hill where he remained until retirement.

"Those were the best years of my life," he says, "I loved every minute."

His biggest thrill? At the conclusion of a worship service in Rouge Valley Mennonite Church, former student Yvonne (Semlacher) Fockler came over and gave him a hug.

John and Elisabeth Roberts are the proud parents of son Frederick of Toronto, daughter Margaret Drudge of Dickson's Hill and four grandchildren.

*Jim Thomas is a Stouffville resident who has written for area newspapers for more than 50 years.*

## SMOKED PORK HOCKS

As you know by now, we have copious amounts of these beauties prior to the holidays, because for every ham that we make, there's a hock. They're meatier than usual, slow-smoked over oak and delicious as can be!  
**.99**  
While quantities last.

## WHAT'S COOKIN'! AT THE DELI

We'll start with slow-roasted boneless chicken breasts (air-chilled) which have been stuffed with a butternut squash and chive risotto.

Next, we'll be making eggplant towers. These are made as a sandwich, the filling being a mix of breadcrumbs, sautéed bell peppers, sweet onions, garlic, parsley, olive oil and sea salt. We then bake them till they're golden brown.

Next, we'll be doing a feature with our broccoli and cauliflower salad. This is made with local veggies, cut bite-size and tossed in a mayo-based dressing with our homemade bacon bits and diced sweet onions. Lastly, since the Bartlett pears are so good now, you'll be able to get one of my trademark brie and pear sandwiches for lunch.

## PRIME SIRLOINS

You've all read my explanation of beef grading in the past. I'm sure, so suffice it to say that this is the top grade in Canada, and of very limited supply. As a rule, we pay a lot extra to get this meat — but not this week — we'll even have a deal happening.

This would be with centre-cut sirloin steaks, sirloin tenders (something new) and sirloin burgers. The supply is a bit limited, so when these are gone, they are gone.  
**20% OFF THIS WEEK**



## LOCAL BLUEBERRIES

These are the highbush variety (not wild) and very full of flavour. These are pretty much the last of the local season — what a way to go.  
**1.99**  
From Ontario

**CREAM OF CAULIFLOWER SOUP**  
This is a chicken stock-based soup, with onions, celery, cream, white wine and seasoning. It's really good either hot or chilled.  
Reg. \$5.99 ea.  
Serves 3-4  
**25% OFF THIS WEEK**

**COLDWATER SWORDFISH FROM NEW ZEALAND**  
Like the warm-water variety, it has a firm/meaty texture, perhaps a bit lighter in colour, and a similarly mild flavour.  
The big shipment arrives Friday.  
**19.95**  
L.B. THIS WEEK

**LOCAL SWEET POTATOES**  
We'll have a good supply of great Sweet Potatoes from now till Thanksgiving. They're grown in southwestern Ontario, they're a good size and look great.  
**79¢**  
lb.

**SMOKED TURKEY**  
This is a reminder that if you want one of our smoked turkeys for Thanksgiving, you'll need to order it soon. These are our free-range turkeys which we've cured and smoked over hardwood.  
**4.50**  
lb.  
Order deadline is October 1st!

## FREE-RANGE TURKEY

We've sold these amazing turkeys now for the last 20 years. Although the farm has changed hands from father to son, it's the same growing and processing technique that has produced what we — and others — feel are the best turkeys available.

What makes them so good? It's simple, really. Firstly, they eat lots of grain and corn — as much or as little as they want, because they run loose.

Add to this a gentle de-feathering process which leaves more of the natural flavour (and the odd feather) with the turkey, and you'll have a bird which will exceed your expectations without the aid of the artificial enhancement that Butterballs and pre-basted turkeys receive. Ours are moist (naturally), tender and full of flavour — and they cook a bit quicker as well. Although we have pretty much any size above 14 lbs. available, I would be picking one from 16 to 20 lbs. — they seem to have the best meat — and lots of it.

Ready to roast!  
Also, should you wish parts of turkey, including breasts which are boneless (either plain or stuffed), they'll be available.  
**2.79**  
lb.

## WHAT'S FOR DINNER!

In our big kitchen we've been making copious amounts of our beautiful beef stroganoff. This to me is big-time comfort food. It's great with mashed potatoes, egg noodles or spaetzle, or with rice — all you need to do is thaw it and warm it. All the work's done!

Serves 3-4  
Reg. \$15.95  
**25% OFF THIS WEEK**

## WHAT ABOUT FRUITCAKE?

As most of you know, Doreen makes both light and dark cake every year for the store. The dark is made in January — right after Christmas while we're still in the spirit(s) — and put to age till we start cutting it close to Christmas. The light variety (light only in colour) is made later in September and in early October because it doesn't require the same aging to bring out the best. Doreen (and Grethe) have pronounced themselves totally thrilled with this year's batch that's now complete — watch for it from Nov. 22nd on.

**HONEY GARLIC SAUSAGES**  
We'll be making lots of these for this week's feature. They have a nice full flavour, a good amount of garlic, but not spicy. A bit of advice is that everyone at the table should partake, just to prevent any obvious lingering effects!  
Reg. \$3.99/lb.  
**25% OFF THIS WEEK**

**CUT SQUASH**  
Our produce guys are always so obliging — this is just another example of their eagerness to make life easier in the kitchen. We'll be starting to sell our peeled and cut butternut squash for the Fall season. Turnips start next week!

**WHAT'S BAKING! THIS WEEK!**

We're doing ginger this week, and we're making:  
• **GINGER CAKE** — this is a moist, spiced gingerbread cake layered and iced with vanilla bean buttercream, decorated with hand-painted autumn ginger cookies.  
Two sizes... **14.95 & 22.95** ea.

• **GINGER CREAM BRULEE** — our creamy, velvety brulee with candied ginger baked in.  
Reg. \$3.99 ea.  
(which includes a 50¢ deposit on the ramekin)

• **GINGER SHORTBREADS** — these are butter shortbreads with candied ginger. Sublime!  
**9.95** cont.

• **GINGER SNAPS** — actually, these don't snap; they're a bit moist for that. It's the perfect cookie for vanilla ice cream, a cup of tea or coffee, or even with milk after school, with all the neighbourhood kids.  
Reg. \$6.95 pk.

All these items will be priced at **25% OFF THIS WEEK** if you've been wondering what we'll be making for Thanksgiving, you'll need to wait till next week because I've run out of room — the list is big!

**SPECIALS IN EFFECT UNTIL CLOSING SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 23<sup>RD</sup>**

Hours:

Mon. 11:00-7:00 - Tues. Thurs. 9:00-7:00 - Fri. 9:00-8:00

Sat. 9:00-6:00 - Sun. 10:00-5:00

548 Carlton Road, Unionville

940-1770

www.thevillagegrocer.com

