

# From Cereal to Elephants, The History of the Bowmanville Zoo

by Charles Taws

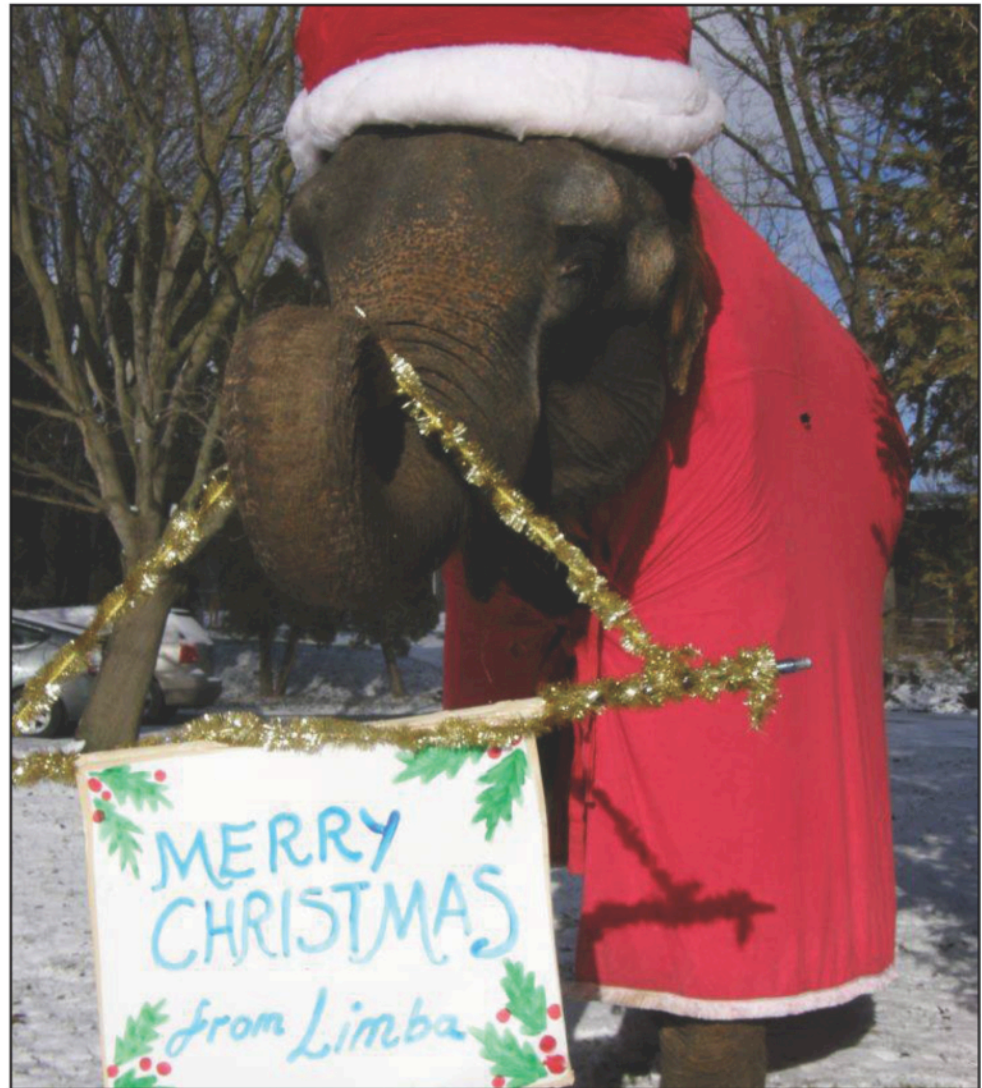
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Limba's standing ovation and applause at this year's Bowmanville Santa Claus Parade shows that many people love the Bowmanville Zoo. It has been a popular attraction in Bowmanville for many years. In fact, it is the oldest privately owned zoo in all of Canada and it has an interesting story to tell. Curiously, when you talk about the history of the Bowmanville Zoo you have to start with the Clarington Visual Arts Centre. For it was here where it all began. Old-timers will tell you the Zoo was once known as the Cream of Barley Park and the Visual Arts Centre was once the Cream of Barley Mill.

The current mill building which houses the Art Centre was built in 1905, but there has been a mill on this site since 1805. The Soper family were the first to build here but it was when it came under the ownership of John MacKay in 1884 that our story begins. This enterprising Scottish emigrant developed a popular hot breakfast cereal called Cream of Barley. In its heyday the mill worked day and night to fill orders for all of Canada and throughout the British Empire. By the time he died in 1902 John Mackay had turned his modest mill into a notable commercial em-



pire. Management passed to his son-in-law James Lake Morden who had married his daughter Marjory. Bowmanville has seen few personalities as colourful as Mr. Morden who sometimes styled himself a colonel and actually looked a lot like Colonel Sanders long before Kentucky Fried Chicken became a household word.

"Colonel" Morden was an excellent manager, but

as the 1920's approached cold cereals were gaining in favour over hot ones. He decided to take on another project and that was the establishment of the Cream of Barley Tourist Park. Always a forward thinker, the dawn of the automobile age was upon society and Morden realized that few services were available to these travellers who all had money to spend. His park would of-

fer cabins for accommodation, but also recreation facilities for everyone to use. There were tennis courts, a race track, swimming pool, golf course, archery range, a snack bar and even gas pumps and, most importantly for our story, a petting zoo. The "Colonel" never did anything in a small way and at the 1919 opening he said without fear of contra-

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# History of the Bowmanville Zoo

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dition, that his camp was the finest place of its kind on the continent and he was going to make it still better.

Colonel Morden claimed he got the idea for the park when he saw youngsters playing in the dusty streets of Bowmanville because they had no other place to go. His park was open to all and he never charged admission. On the front of the main zoo building on Highway # 2, which still stands today, he had the motto written "You Live, Let Others Live". There are many stories about Morden, here is one of them. If he saw a car with American licence plates stop he would ask the owners what state they were from. It didn't matter the answer as he always replied "Why, that's my old home State" and engage them in a lengthy conversation. This led to many believing he was an American but he was Canadian having been born in Flesherton, Ontario.

Another unique personality associated with the Mill and Zoo is Alfred Shrubbs. Mr. Shrubbs was born in England in 1879. He broke over a dozen run-

ning records around the turn of the last century. Some of his records held on to the 1950's. While touring Canada in 1918 he stopped in Bowmanville and worked at the mill for a short time. In 1928, with his running career behind him, he came back to Bowmanville to become a business partner with Morden. He became the first manager of the Park and eventually, upon Morden's death in 1945, became owner of the Mill and Park along with long time secretary Beryl Percy. His favourite part of the job was looking after the animals.

A 1927 description mentions the park as covering 20 acres and the zoo as including two opossums (sent from Tennessee by a man who had visited the Camp in the previous year), 2 foxes, a pair of rare pigeons, Muscovy ducks (a gift from the Federal Government), muskrats, guinea pigs, rabbits, skunks, wolves and a wild dog sent from Northern, Ontario. Morden had also established a bird sanctuary around his millpond.

Morden was always adding new attractions to his Park and a year later in 1928, the zoo had added a

monkey, a parrot, two bear cubs and the most dangerous animal of all - a Belgian Police dog. "With that dog," boasted Morden, "we don't need a night watchman around here". In 1930, we see raccoons, golden pheasants, peacocks, turkeys, butterflies, an owl, a golden eagle, two angora goats and a pair of Shetland ponies added. Other parts of the Park were not neglected and new swings, slides, gymnastic equipment and two "ocean waves" kept the kids healthy and active. The Toronto Star wrote in 1931 that "Squire" Morden, "has long been known as the friend of wild fur, feathers and fins."

When Morden died in 1945 the park was still going strong because he had added improvements every year. The mill had become second to the park and in 1949 the owners, Alfred Shrubbs and Beryl Percy, sold that part of the business to two men who moved everything to St. Boniface Manitoba and it is here that the cereal story fades from history.

Morden's nephew Jim Skinner of Lockport Manitoba took over ownership of the park, but he sold it to Don Mitchell. Mr. Mitch-



This building survives today as the entrance for the Zoo. This photo was taken in the 1930's. On the front is the logo of "Colonel" James Lake Morden's personal philosophy, "You Live Let Others Live".

ell sold it in 1950 to Mrs. Shirley Connell who ran the park with her son Keith and his wife Barbara. She also hired Mr. and Mrs. Frank Belbin as park managers. The Connells and Belbins planned to renovate the property and bring in new animals for the zoo. In the end they replaced all the animals except a bear. Nellie, the popular Java monkey, was deemed too old to enjoy the presence of strangers and was sent to a sanctuary. It was thought at the time that she was as old as the Camp itself, but the first mention of a monkey at the zoo was in 1928. That means she was still over 22 years old at the time. The Ontario Department of Lands and Forests agreed to issue a permit to allow them to keep wild animals, but also offered to send them some animals too. In 1954 the Connells became the managers as well as owners of the Zoo.

Shirley Connell was a cousin of Morden's and their tenure here was a long one. It was they who presided over the change of the property from a tourist camp with a zoo to exclusively a zoo. Like Morden they added many improvements over the years. It is hard to attach a firm date as to when the name "Cream of Barley Park" stopped and the "Bowmanville Zoo" began but it does seem to have happened around 1964. A November 1962 reference mentions, "The Cream of Barley Camp, also known as the Bowmanville Zoo."

The Connells increased the number of cabins and modernized them. They put in a new larger pool that was very popular among youngsters in the community. The Bowmanville High School held swimming contests there. Keith added a pair of zebras in 1961. They

were purchased from a zoo in Florida that was closing. Several llamas came in 1964. In February 1965 a dozen gibbon monkeys arrived from Thailand. The trip by plane only took a day and each monkey was wearing a handmade kimono to protect them from the cold. By the 1970's the Connell's were raising animals for other zoos. Cooperation with other zoos became important to ensure rare animals could breed. In one case, two black leopard cubs were born from the union of a female from Bowmanville and a male from the Riverdale Zoo in Toronto. Deer, waterfowl, chickens, emus, camels and Sam the talking mynah bird are mentioned. It was about this time admission began to be charged to cover costs.

In the 1980's the Bowmanville Zoo was known for raising camels. Bowmanville bred camels found their way into many zoos in the United States and even as far away as Guatemala and Cuba. In 1987 Keith and his two sons, Tom and Allen, ran the zoo and attracted over 110,000 visitors. By this time two elephants had been added, including the popular Angus. In January 1988 they sold their beloved zoo to a group of four people. Two were animal trainers already working at the zoo, Mike Hackenberger and Leslie Pon Tell. They began a \$600,000 facelift to improve the zoo's facilities for both animals and people alike. A longer season with enhanced educational opportunities, Bengal tigers and more reptiles followed soon after.

Since it began the Bowmanville Zoo has always been a part of Bowmanville. How many special events were made more special by the appearance of an elephant,

llama or camel? There are just too many to count. I remember driving to work one day and seeing Mike Hackenberger leading a parade of an elephant, zebra and other animals to a hospital fund-raiser. I thought, you wouldn't see that in any other town in Ontario. The recent museum exhibit on ice age mammals was enlivened by a visit from Limba. What a treat for a youngster to learn about mammoths and mastodons and then turn around to see their living descendent out on the front lawn. Helen MacDonald, in a 1988 letter, summed up the zoos special relationship with its community, "The Bowmanville Zoo has always accommodated the keen interest that is unique to children in their joy of meeting the animals 'face-to-face'. That is one of the special attractions of the Zoo."

From cereal to elephants the Bowmanville Zoo is an unparalleled attraction that makes Clarington unique. Its story is truly one of the most interesting in Clarington's 219 year history.

The Santa Claus Parade has happened and so has the Friends of the Museum's Craft and Bake Sale. Don't miss our Annual Edwardian Christmas Open House from 7:00pm to 9:00pm on December 6th 2013. It's the same night as the downtown Tree Lighting Ceremony. Come to the Sarah Jane Williams Heritage Centre at 62 Temperance Street for music and refreshments. From here we will be leading groups on a Christmas tour of the Bowmanville Museum. Period decorations, oil lamps and candles really give you the feel of Christmas in Bowmanville long ago. Admission is by donation and for more information call 905-623-2734 or check out our website at [www.claringtonmuseums.com](http://www.claringtonmuseums.com).



by **Jim Abernethy**, Publisher

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# Welcome to our special Christmas Edition

In this special December edition of the Clarington Promoter we are featuring the Bowmanville Zoo, one of the oldest businesses in our community.

The Bowmanville Zoo has been very supportive of our community in many ways.

For generations it has provided work and learning experience for our youth, entertainment for our families, and world-wide notoriety thru its involvement in feature films and documentaries.

Bowmanville Zoo is a learning centre, a destination point for school events and families who travel from cities, towns and villages beyond the GTA.

We are fortunate to have a world class zoo right here in our backyard.

It is upsetting to see people who are not from our community but are generally from the USA or Europe, who encourage other people (also not from our community) to protest with placards outside the Bowmanville Zoo, or to threaten to disrupt another sacred family institution - the Santa Clause Parade - should certain animals take part.

Hats off to the people of Clarington who have stood your ground in a show of community support for the people and the animals of the Bowmanville Zoo.

Michael Hackenburger is thankful for the overwhelming support our community continues to give the Bowmanville Zoo, especially during the issue of the Bowmanville Santa Clause Parade.

Please take a moment to read the email from Michael (on page 7 this edition) expressing his concerns about that issue.

It's beginning to feel a lot like Christmas !

Christmas is a time of celebration of giving, and our community does that well.

A big Thank You going out to Janice Parish, Broker of Record and all the staff at Royal Service Real Estate for a job well done on Saturday November 16th .

During the Royal Service 5th Annual Fund Raiser for the Clarington East Food Bank \$8,420 plus 336 lbs of food was collected and donated to the East Clarington Food Bank.

Mark your calendars for the countdown to the Christmas Tree-lighting Ceremony at the Bank of Montreal in historic downtown Bowmanville on Friday, December 6 @ 6:30 PM.

Bundle up the family and listen to carollers sing, or have your picture taken with Santa and his Live Reindeer. This is a great time to Christmas shop, as participating downtown stores remain open late and many have sales for the evening.

This festival is enjoyed by many families and remember, you support our community when you purchase a Christmas Tree from the Rotary Club of Bowmanville which continues their tradition of selling real Christmas Trees at Watson Farms on Hwy #2, just west of Green Road in Bowmanville – Open Monday to Fridays 9 AM - 8PM, and Sat & Sun 10 AM – 6 PM.

Shop early and choose from their selection of Fraser or Balsam Fir - Scotch Pine – White, Siberian or Colorado Spruce.

Rotary International is one of many local service clubs which conduct fund raising events to help support local projects and individuals with needs.

I would like to extend my appreciation to the many people who have gone out of their way to express disappointment in learning that we have reduced the frequency of this publication. I was disappointed too!



**Rotarian President Don Hutton unloading the first shipment of Christmas Trees**

I trust you will enjoy this and future Special Editions of the Clarington Promoter.

We have been keeping up with those industry changes. If you have access to a computer we invite you to go online to read all 25 of our past editions/issues, starting with April 2011.

Simply visit [claringtonpromoter.ca](http://claringtonpromoter.ca) where you will find all of our past historical & business articles, as well as Cathy's favourite recipes.

I also invite you to connect with me on LinkedIn – go to [linkedin.com](http://linkedin.com) and search Jim Abernethy to “connect” or “invite” use this email address: [jimabernethy@hotmail.com](mailto:jimabernethy@hotmail.com)

Wishing you and your family a wonderful holiday season and a healthy and peaceful New Year..... Jim

# What Are The Core Values of Your Business?



by Peter Hobb

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Values provide a standard for how we conduct ourselves. They guide our behaviour. In a company context values are important since they provide everyone within the organization a blue print for how they relate to each other, the company's customers, others who they come in contact with and how they go about doing their job. A company's values

will direct how the company is going to achieve its vision.

Values also provide a foundation for how you should respond in any situation. I had a recent experience that highlights this point. It happened while I was on vacation during a lunch with friends. When the meals were served one friend realized, after taking a few bites of his hamburger, that it wasn't properly cooked. In fact, on the inside, it was close to raw. He pointed this out to the server who wasn't sure what to do so she asked the shift manager to deal with it. The shift manager acknowledged that the hamburger wasn't cooked properly and then asked why he had eaten some of it. My friend wasn't

sure how to respond. The issue was that the restaurant was not immediately taking responsibility for the problem and that my friend was, in some way, responsible because he had eaten part of it. Needless to say this is a restaurant that we will not go back to. My guess is the restaurant owners had not provided much guidance to the server and the manager so they were unsure how to respond. The restaurant did not have a set of values to guide the behaviour of its employees or, if it did, they were not adhered to. If, for example, one of the restaurant's values was to focus on the customer and act in their best interests, it is likely that the restaurant manager or even the server would have

acted differently and quickly to resolve the problem to my friend's satisfaction. If this had been done we all would likely have had a more favorable impression of the restaurant. Responding proactively to solve a customer's problem to their satisfaction can actually create a more loyal customer.

All too often the value system of a company is not clearly understood by everyone in the organization. It is important that the values be clearly defined and specific. You will see company value statements that include integrity as one of the values. It is a given that anyone working for you should have integrity. If they don't they shouldn't be there. However what does integrity mean in your organization.

In establishing our values our team developed a list of what integrity means to them. We then incorporated some of these ideas into our value statement. For example, our statement includes the following under integrity "we will be known for keeping our word". This statement is specific and very relevant to our business.

It is important that everyone in your company live its values. No exceptions! If people not living the company's values are tolerated then trust and respect among your people will disappear giving rise to a dysfunctional work environment. People living the company's values should be rewarded. The ones who do not should be punished and possibly shown the door. These actions will reinforce

your company's values and likely make people more committed to living them.

When a company develops its value statement everyone in the organization should be involved. By doing this you will get a lot of great ideas and a higher level of buy in. Extensive debate should be encouraged. You do not want to leave anyone with an out. Value statements should be visible to everyone and reinforced at every opportunity. How we conduct ourselves in our personal lives or in business is driven by our value system. Having everyone in your business living the same values is powerful and will give your company a competitive edge not to mention a great work environment.