

# Roberts keeps images of Canada alive

## Cross-country voyages supply inspiration

By DECLAN FINUCANE  
Special

When Tom Roberts bought his first car in 1941, it changed his life.

A 1936 Plymouth brought Roberts, now 86, out of his Toronto neighborhood and set him off on a cross-Canada adventure that has lasted to this day.

In the process, Roberts has also brought his version of Canada to those who admire his oil paintings.

"Getting a car got me to places I had never seen before. It changed our lives," reflects Roberts, who has lived in Mississauga with his wife Mary since 1946. His paintings are on display at the Harbour Gallery through Nov. 19, along with works by Art Cunanan, Brian Atyeo and Daniel Izzard.

Roberts started painting during the '20's while living in Toronto. Two decades later, he began travelling the country and, today, he proudly announces he's painted every province in Canada.

"The whole darn country is all so different, all the provinces have beautiful things to offer," marvels Roberts, who admits Quebec has been his favorite subject over the years. "There's a variety of stuff there (Quebec), it's just so unbelievable. We've taken summer trips there for 30 years, and the people there have always been great to us."

Roberts just as easily gets inspiration from his own back yard. With his home backing onto the Credit River, he has reproduced with his brush many local scenes over the years, including a typical Canadian scene, that of kids playing street hockey.

While Roberts' work represents a wide variety of "Canadiana," including a soft winter scenes in Toronto and



Staff photo by Rob Beintema

Mississauga artist Tom Roberts, 86, has painted scenes from every province in Canada in his 60 years of work. A collection of his paintings are on display at the Harbour Gallery through Nov. 19.

others that remind viewers of the beauty and history of the country, he has his own personal favorites.

"I love railroad stations, there's not many left these days. I also love the prairies, they're a wonderful subject. The wide open space, you can just go nuts," says Roberts, who's travelled across Canada by train a dozen times. "There's something about a train ride across the country that's really inspira-

tional. When you do your own driving, you can miss a lot of the things. I get more stuff looking out a train window than from anywhere else."

Today, Roberts reflects on his six decades of painting. While he's lessened his travel schedule, the brush is still always in hand.

"I've been at it for over 60 years, and I still love it. I paint every day," he says. "I'll be 87 in December, so I don't

go out painting in the winter as I used to, but I still take a couple of trips a year.

"There was a time in the '60's when I broke away from what I had been doing, I wanted to experiment," Roberts continues. "But, for the last 30 years or so, I've pretty well kept the same style. That doesn't mean I'm still not learning, though. I learn more every time I paint."