

# Mt Sinai Hospital - A History

By Jane Beecroft

The huge history of this property is worth knowing. First owned by Sir David William Smith (1764-1837) as part of a 200-acre



tract from 1798. A lawyer who became Surveyor-General, Smith became depressed by the death of his young wife and returned to England. His property was sold off in blocks, mainly to John Elmsley, Chief Justice of Upper Canada who was moved to the same post in Lower Canada, but died in 1805. His wife inherited the lands, but had returned to England and the properties were sold off by her son, John Elmsley Jr. who shocked the Family Compact and Upper Canadian society by becoming a Catholic and a philanthropist. A block of Mary Elmsley's holdings was purchased by James Dobson, a little Irishman who came to the area as a laborer working for builder George White. Dobson learned what he needed to know and went on with his own building business and greater things. The block he bought was across the street from the Red Lion Inn where discussions had been under way for achieving incorporated status for Yorkville. Dobson left some lots along Yonge for the building of the Town Hall, and laid out Yorkville Avenue with building

lots, one of which was purchased by James Bridgland. Dobson went on to become the first Postmaster and first Reeve of Yorkville, while Bridgland traveled Upper Canada as a surveyor, laying out, among other important works, the road between the lakehead and Winnipeg. His house was built at 100 Yorkville out of red and yellow brick from the Yorkville Brickyards. When it was ready, Bridgland rented it to Nicoll Kingsmill, an important lawyer in the history of the area, whose house, Ardenvohr, was under construction on the escarpment. When Bridgland died and Kingsmill was in his own house, Bridgland's widow lived briefly in the house until it was sold. The purchaser was the very first Lyndhurst Hospital which quickly outgrew the premises and moved up to Connable Drive, south of St. Clair. The next transformation of the space was Canada's first Jewish Hospital, named Mount Sinai. Jewish housewives, through the usual bake sales and things that housewives do to support their community, raised the down payment. The hospital grew and was the first medical establishment in the city to have a radiology unit. The doctors had their offices in buildings across the street and were the primary force in the construction of the Physicians and Surgeons' Building at Bloor and Bellair – the first tall building ever built on Bloor. The hospital's expansion was across the front of the Bridgland House in yellow brick, with fluted pilasters flanking the front door and bore the Star of David. These are symbols of Yorkville's willingness to accept people from all backgrounds.. Mount Sinai moved to University Avenue and the property was sold again. The next occupants were old people who were residents of St. Raphael's Nursing Home. The MacLeans, who owned the property and business, painted the façade in the present gray – something they later regretted. But the old folks and the flower children of the 60s and 70s had many happy

exchanges over the iron fence. The MacLeans decided to redevelop, but the local and regional community, led effectively by ABC, thwarted the plan and MacLean, in anger, tore down the Bridgland house as the furor led to the designation of the 1934 façade. Again the property was up for sale and was purchased by Jasmac as an investment property for redevelopment. This plan was never realized and currently an application is before the city (see Mt. Sinai under Development Issues on page 3).