



INTELLECTUAL PROFITS

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE COMMUNITY HISTORY PROJECT

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An Affiliate of the Ontario Historical Society (Ontario No. 729493)

The previous listings show the residents of the houses at 116-134 during the first sixteen years of life in the houses. About some of the residents nothing is known, while others were prominent in society and in the community. For instance, J.A. McMurtry owned the McMurtry Tea Company at 326 Yonge which sold a range of goods including baking powder and gifts.

What is not known is the architect/builder of the houses, since there are no building permits for that period, but it is suspected that George H. White, or his son of the same name, designed and built the houses. They are consistent in size and design, with gables that form a rhythmic skyline pattern, and they were all built in the same time frame on lands owned by George H. White. They are consistent architecturally with other houses in Yorkville in lot size, height, and massing, and were most likely to have been built of Yorkville brick. They should be restored to their original character as houses, even if they have commercial uses.

Yorkville's Fourth and Most Famous Period

In the 1950s, artists displaced from Toronto's "Greenwich Village" to the south were attracted by Yorkville's character and low rents and moved in to make Yorkville then the centre of the arts scene in the city. The galleries which sprang up to serve them drew visitors from all over the city and the country. The House of Hambourg drew jazz musicians and composers, and the Embassy Hotel catered to a sophisticated crowd in either its cocktail lounge or dance floor which had a big band with top singers. The houses of Yorkville had heavy use but remained unchanged and had the added charm of age and history. Yorkville was happy and interesting then. In the 1960s, the flower children arrived, equally attracted by the low rents and interesting environment. Coffee houses were set up in the old houses: at 112 was The Penny Farthing; 114 was The Mynah Bird (first to feature topless dancers and the most notorious of the coffee houses); 130 was the original Mr. Submarine; 132 was Jacques' Discotheque; and 134 was the most famous coffeehouse of all, the Riverboat, which offered artists such as Gordon Lightfoot, Joni Mitchell, Sonny Terry, and Brownie McGhee. Yorkville's streets were plugged full with visitors, and its fame spread around the world. 116-134 became the symbol of the village and was the main location for activity, although it was not alone. While the city fathers fussed about how to control matters, as drugs were creeping in, and the police fumed in frustration over how to control the crowds and the emerging problems, the first village community association was formed by local businessmen. This period ended when redevelopment began and the colourful hippies and camp followers were driven out by rising prices for property. It was the old houses, the artists, and the hippies which made Yorkville so attractive then, and of the three only a few of the old houses have survived in modified form. Those who followed, wanting both profits and success, set about altering or destroying the very elements which might have brought them profits and success.