

Mount Sinai's humble past faces the wrecking ball

For many baby boomers, Toronto's Yorkville Avenue is forever linked to the the 1960s, when it was *the* gathering place for Canada's hippies. Four decades earlier, however, Yorkville Avenue was notable for another reason — the facility that would become Canada's first Jewish general hospital was established at 100 Yorkville Ave. in 1922.

Eighty years later, that 33-bed maternity and convalescent hospital has evolved into Mount Sinai Hospital, a 462-bed teaching facility on University Avenue, but the building where it got its start sits vacant and boarded up, awaiting the wrecker's ball.

The original back section is already gone, and signs have sprouted advertising a 13-storey building for the site. But Toronto residents, including award-winning writer Margaret Atwood, protested the proposed demolition, and the matter is now before the Ontario Municipal Board.

"Mount Sinai was a product of necessity," explains Jane Beecroft of Canada's History Project, a group that is trying to protect areas of historic importance from destruction. She points out that in the first part of the 20th century there was systemic discrimination against not only the Jewish community but against anything non-British. In Toronto's hospitals, for instance, there was a policy of not hiring Jews.

In 1916, members of Toronto's Jewish community decided that they needed a hospital of their own. Four determined women, known collectively as the Ezras Noshem Society, then set out to make a Jewish hospital a reality. By 1922, through vigorous campaigning and fundraising, Ezras Noshem had raised \$12 000, enough for the down payment on 100 Yorkville, and the Toronto Hebrew Maternity and Convalescent Hospital was founded, with all 40 of Toronto's Jewish doctors joining its staff. Thirty years later it moved into a state-of-the-art, \$7.3-million facility on University Avenue.

Today, little remains to remind passersby of the role 100 Yorkville Ave. played in the evolution of medicine in Canada, but those who look closely can still see the Star of David etched into the plaster on either side of the front door. — *Peter Wilton*, Toronto



The entrance marking Mount Sinai's humble beginnings: calls mount to save the building from the wrecking crew

PULSE

Smokers are a dying breed

Recent data from the Canadian Tobacco Use Monitoring Survey indicate that more than half of adult Canadians (54%) have never smoked, and another 24% are former smokers. By 2001, just 22% of Canadians age 15 or older were smokers, down from 24% in 2000 and 25% in 1999. Males were more

likely than females to smoke (24% vs. 16%). For both males and females, the highest smoking rates were found in the 20-to-24 age group (35% and 29%, respectively), and the lowest rates were among those aged 55 or older (14% and 12%). At 26%, Newfoundland and Labrador and Prince Edward Island had the highest proportion of smokers, while British Columbia had the lowest (17%).

Canadian smokers consumed an average of 16.2 cigarettes per day in 2001. There were slight variations by age, with those aged 45 or older smoking an average of 17.4 cigarettes and those aged 15 to 19 smoking 12.9. Men tended to smoke more than women (17.1 per day vs. 15).

Twenty-two percent of smokers light their first cigarette within 5 minutes of waking up, while 24% wait for at least an hour before reaching for one. Half of daily smokers had made no attempt to quit during the previous year, while 38% had tried to quit 1 to 3 times and 12% had made 4 or more attempts.

Smokers aged 45 and older were least likely to have attempted to quit in the past year (39%), while smokers aged 15 to 19 were most likely to have tried to kick the habit (68%). — *Shelley Martin*, Senior Analyst, CMA Research, Policy and Planning Directorate

