

# Doncaster Ballyhoo

FOR LAURENTIAN WATERFRONT AND RECREATIONAL PROPERTY      Number 22      Winter 1999-2000

**T**hanks to the generosity of our many donors and to the Town of Sainte-Agathe-des-Monts, the English heritage tour is at the printers'. We look forward to sending copies out to all those who contributed so kindly to the realisation of this venture, along with the tax receipts, early in the new year.

*You may have noticed the four historic panels placed around Sainte-Agathe this summer. They describe four major themes in our history: At the corner of Saint-Louis Street and Tour du Lac, just outside of La Quimperlaise, there is one describing the history of our hospitals; at Parc Lagny one describes the recreational communities; at the corner of Saint-Vincent and Principale, one describes the commercial history; and the one at the Catholic Church describes the history of the congregation. Sheila translated these into English and copies of the translation are available at the Tourism and Information Office at 24 Saint-Paul Street (the old railway station). The Heritage Committee is continuing with this project and there will soon be more panels installed.*

The Town Council of Sainte-Agathe has voted to name the road leading to the Chateau Belvoir "Sir Mortimer B. Davis Road." It runs up the mountain away from the lake over the property that once belonged to Sir Mortimer. Over the next year a number of streets and avenues will be reviewed. This results in part from the merger of the two Sainte-Agathes and the opportunity this provides to review street names in terms of their historic context. Earlier this summer, the Foundation of the Sir Mortimer B. Davis Jewish General Hospital chose our town for their walk-a-thon and it is likely that this event also influenced the decision of the council. Sainte-Agathe first named the streets in the centre of town in the autumn of 1900.

*Speaking of Sir Mortimer Davis, the Mount Sinai Hospital building may well be slated for demolition. The building is situated on 164 acres of land in Préfontaine and is a 4-storey edifice with an annex known as the Nurse's Residence which was added some time after the initial structure. Mount Sinai Hospital moved to Montreal in 1990 and the building was subsequently used by the Centre Hospitalier Laurentien for its long-term care facilities but they moved out in 1998. It is considered to be poorly located for this kind of use and it is in serious need of repair, particularly the Nurse's Residence. The food bank, Moisson des Pays-d'En-Haut, has been using one of the out-buildings as its headquarters for the last 6 years and is in the process of trying to establish a protocol with the Regional Health Board and Mount Sinai to continue to do so. It is sad to think that such a great historic structure will vanish into history, but no alternative use has been found.*

We take this opportunity to wish you and yours a happy holiday season and a healthy winter, whether you spend it Up North with us or down south.

**(819) 326-4963**



# TWO GREAT BENEFACTORS

In addition to its French Catholic core, Ste. Agathe also boasts large English-speaking Jewish and Protestant communities, and, just like the French, these others are founded upon the efforts and encouragement of strong leaders and benefactors. Two such men were Sir Mortimer B. Davis and Lorne McGibbon and despite their differing roots, they lived surprisingly parallel lives. They were both born to well established families; both attended Montreal High School, both became business leaders in Montreal, and both chose to holiday in Ste. Agathe. Even their choice of property was similar. They each built large stone homes on the south side of the lake on huge tracts of land with commanding views. Each property had a peninsula jutting out into the lake, and both homes survive today, although, at least in the case of Lorne McGibbon's, in somewhat modified form.

Most importantly, both men were major benefactors of tuberculosis hospitals in Ste. Agathe. The Laurentian Sanitarium was largely the achievement of Lorne McGibbon and Sir Mortimer B. Davis was the major contributor to the construction and operation of Mount Sinai Hospital.

When Dr. Richer's hospital burned down in 1902, its loss did not put an end to TB treatment in Ste. Agathe. There is sufficient evidence that even prior to the founding of the Richer hospital people were coming for 'the cure'. This cure, pioneered by Dr. Bremner in Germany and Dr. Trudeau in Saranac Lake, New York, consisted of obliging the patient to shed all responsibility and move to a cool, dry climate high above sea level. There, he or she was to rest and let nature do her work.

The importance of the cure in Ste. Agathe life can be seen in Dr. Grignon's *Album Historique* from 1912. Not only does he list three TB sanatoria and preventoria, he also

refers to other buildings that had previously been used for the cure. He lists seven different private sanatoria adding 'et cetera' to the end of the list, all the while protesting that the TB patients in Ste. Agathe in no way endanger the health of other visitors and residents.

There are many stories of people coming to Ste. Agathe and buying a property simply to allow a sick family member to 'take the cure'. Many of us are descended from these TB patients. In a very real sense, the story of Ste. Agathe is the story of TB which was a very important aspect of our society. Who can forget the once ubiquitous cross with the double horizontal axis that was the symbol of TB care and fund-raising, or the annual tests in the schools to make sure we were not TB positive.

When TB was finally conquered with streptomycin in 1954, Ste. Agathe went into an economic tailspin from which it has never fully recovered. Even now, a debate continues over what to do with the Mount Sinai Hospital building that sits abandoned and deteriorating on a hillside above Préfontaine. At the same time, the original building of the Laurentian Sanitarium, a beautiful three-storey Tudor structure, stands behind the hospital and is only partly in use as administrative offices.

This fall the Ste. Agathe city council voted to name a road going over the original Davis property the *Chemin Sir Mortimer B. Davis*, but Lorne McGibbon still awaits similar public recognition.

It will take two future editions of the Ballyhoo to describe these two great benefactors. It will take many more than that to recount even a fragment of the stories that resulted from this period.



# What's It Worth

## Or

# Preparing Your House for Sale

People often ask me what they should do to prepare their house for sale. Should they paint the wall where the pipes had to be repaired? Organise the basement? Fix the leaking roof? Put bread in the oven? My reaction is usually very cautious. Most often the question is asked with a view to getting a higher price from the sale of a house. The motives are fine, but the hour is late.

Some people are more organised than others, of course, but aside from such differences, it is usually possible to tell if a house 'works' by its state of order and repair. The feeling that one gets when entering a house answers the question "Does it work?" If it is very disorganised, it is possible that the house simply doesn't work. Chances are that the places that things are supposed to go are not logical and natural and, as a result, things have a tendency to not get put away properly.

On the other hand, some people are meticulous and well organised and they can, even unconsciously, compensate for a house's weaknesses.

If you are not a well organised person, or if your house is not well set up to help you keep it orderly, the first thing to do is to get rid of clutter. This is something that usually costs nothing and will allow a visitor to get a feeling for how her own furniture will fit. This does not mean the house should be empty. An adequately furnished house will allow a purchaser to gauge room sizes and may well direct the eye away from the contents altogether. When in doubt, err on the side of sparseness.

Next, make sure it is clean. Clean houses always sell faster and better. Shiny surfaces should have a sheen to them and windows should be transparent. If your house looks into the sun, the windows may become a particular challenge. Every little mark seems to show up as though nature is compensating for the advantage of the exposure.

In country houses, these same rules apply very much to the grounds and outbuildings. An empty shed is an invitation to make use of it. A full one presents an overwhelming task.

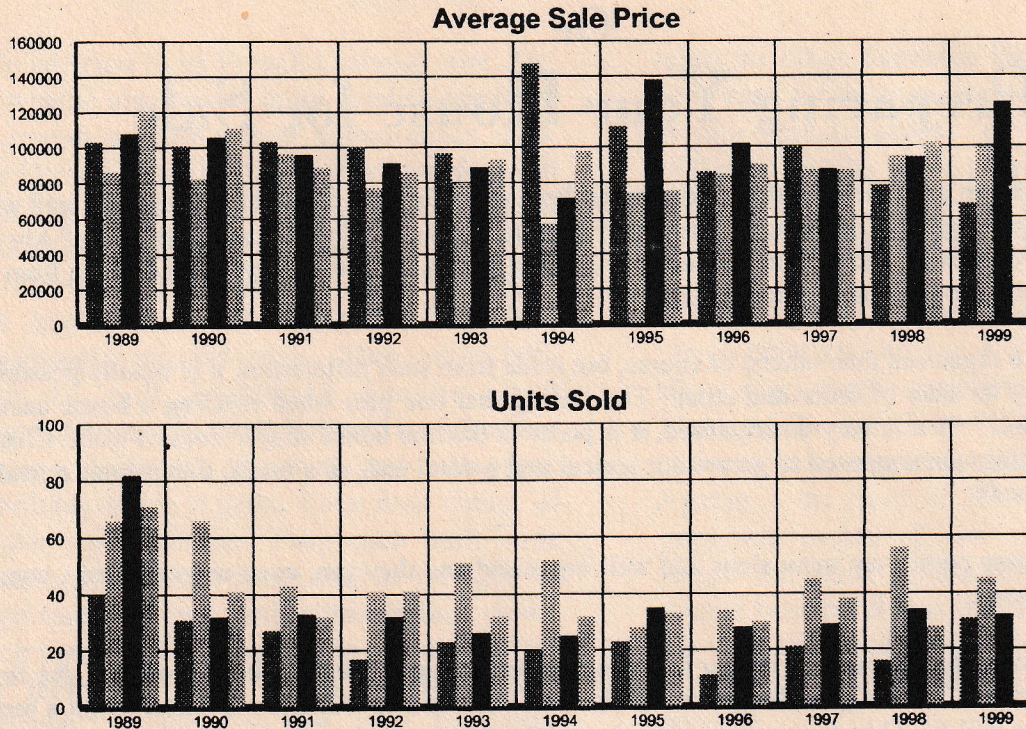
Organisation and cleanliness are the two fundamentals. Getting beyond these, you can look at what has to be fixed and what was never completed, but there are costs associated with this next step. The best answer that I can give to people who ask me what action should be taken to make the house more sellable is that they should do what they would normally do if the house weren't for sale. The state of a house is a reflection of the owner's pride and ability. These are not things that a real estate agent can change with a few words of advice.

In some cases it is even counter productive to give advice. Once I had a vendor who was blind to the obvious defects that both the buyers and I could see. There were water infiltration problems, stained walls and bulging in the concrete block foundation. The price in no way reflected the sorry state of the house. Finally I sat down with the vendor and gave him a detailed list of the obvious problems in an attempt to have him readjust his price. He told me he would consider my concerns and, a few weeks later, he called me back. "Everything is corrected," he informed me. When I arrived to congratulate him, I found that the problems had been expertly hidden. A wall had been built over the collapsing foundation and the water stains had all been covered with new architrave.

The guiding principle of how to prepare your house for sale is well expressed in the old French saying: "*Agir comme bon père de famille.*" As a good father would care for his family, so a good homeowner will care for his property.



# MARKET TRENDS



While we are far from the number of transactions that we saw in 1988 and 1989, the average sale price has been increasing over the last few quarters. The high third quarter average reflects an increase in the sale of second (vacation) homes. This is because waterfront homes are selling and their average value is generally higher than the average price for a local principal residence. We estimate that a recreational buyer will be willing to pay up to 75% of the value of his own principal residence for a second home making it difficult for local buyers just looking for a place to live to compete:

If you would like back issues of the Doncaster Ballyhoo, give us a call or drop by. We will happily add the names of your friends or neighbours to our list if they would like to receive their own copy. Please let us know if you change your address. Having an accurate mailing list helps us keep our costs (and waste) down.

**IMMEUBLES**  
**Doncaster** inc.  
**REALTIES**  
chartered real estate broker

150 rue Principale  
 Ste-Agathe-des-Monts, QC  
 Canada J8C 1K3  
**Tel: (819) 326-4963**  
**Fax: (819) 326-8829**

e-mail: [doncaster@ste-agathe.com](mailto:doncaster@ste-agathe.com)

**Owned and operated by:**

**Joe Graham**  
 chartered real estate agent

**Sheila Eskenazi**  
 affiliated real estate agent

Our office is open six days a week, closed Tuesdays.  
 (Not intended to solicit properties currently listed for sale)

