

METCALFE, Rue

171 à 432



archives
municipales

VOUS NOUS OBLIGERIEZ EN NOUS RETOURNANT

LE DOSSIER DANS LE PLUS BREF DÉLAI.

VOIR: 177

In The Star last Saturday, then...

Hailed house hauled down

By CYNTHIA GUNN

The 80-year-old Victorian house at 177 Metcalfe Avenue Westmount, illustrated in last Saturday's Star as part of a review of the recently published book, *A Feast of Gingerbread*, no longer exists.

It was demolished this week by its owners, Reader's Digest Association

(Canada) Ltd., to comply with Westmount density laws. The company said it had no choice but to demolish the house because it needs more office space to accommodate extra staff to meet Canadian publication standards.

This required the addition of a third floor to its building at 171 Metcalfe and because of Westmount's density regu-

lations there had to be more space around the building.

Ironically, the book, written by architect Warwick Hatton and former librarian Beth Hatton, contains a plea for the preservation of what remains of this unique architectural period in the Montreal area.

May Ebbett-Cutler of Tundra Books of Montreal, publishers of *A Feast of Gingerbread*, said it took two years to find money to produce the soft-cover publication.

Since it was started, several examples contained within its page have been demolished, she said.

The photo of the house on Metcalfe appeared to be the most popular among photo editors, a number of whom chose this house to illustrate reviews of the book in their newspapers, Ms. Cutler said.

The house appears in the "Oriental influences" section.

The authors say: "Eastern-style ornament was popular in Montreal late in the century. Western enthusiasm for Oriental art had developed as a result of expanded trade and travel. The 1876 Centennial Exhibition at Philadelphia introduced Japanese architecture to North America, and the lathe-work screens and ingenious timber construction of the Japanese pavilion were greatly admired.

"Japanese and Chinese structures in wood and bamboo began to be initiated in decorative work in North America. Several porches and balconies were built in Montreal in this style.

Their chief features were lattice screens filling gable ends and friezes, and zigzag balustrades."

Westmount city manager Norman Dawe said this week that the house did not appear on the city's list of more than 200 properties that might be culturally or architecturally valuable.

He said the city had no reason to believe that the house was worth saving.

Montreal architect Michael Fish, one of the best known conservationists in the city, said that the demolition of the house at 177 Metcalfe "was entirely avoidable, but was typical of what's going on in Westmount."

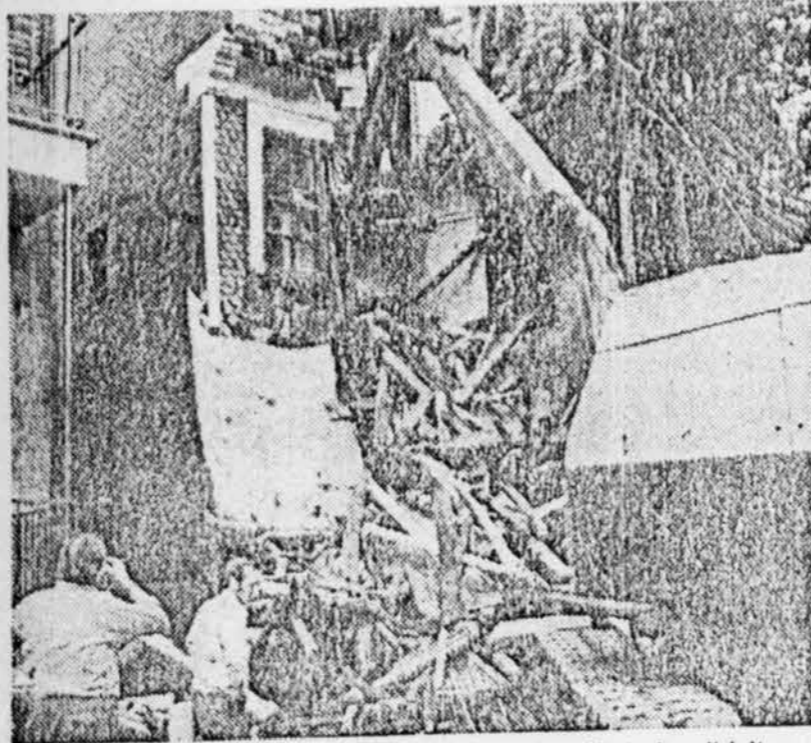
He charged that the city was aware of the house's architectural merit — "it's hard to miss" but chose not to do anything about it.

He said that Westmount council is now composed of people who are "super insensitive" to this "kind of urban issue."

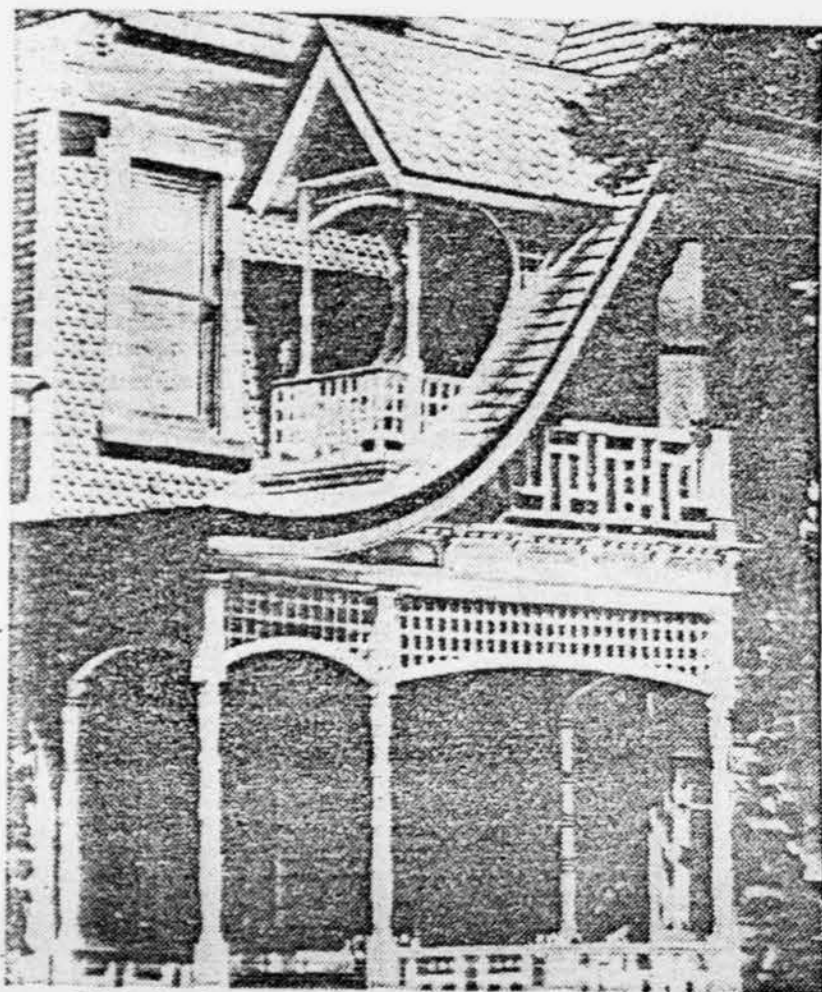
Chapter four of the book shows photos of four houses demolished prior to the publication date. Among them is a mansion on McTavish and houses from 3566 to 3568 on University.

Houses illustrated in the book are from all over the Montreal area. Interestingly, four on Metcalfe Avenue were listed, including the one demolished this week. The other three are at 333, 344 and 430-32 Metcalfe.

The authors state: "At first, houses in the English districts were noted for their extravagance, but by the '90s some of the most fantastic woodwork in Mont-



The house as it was Wednesday as wreckers moved in to demolish it.



This is the photo of the house as reprinted in last Saturday's Star.

real was found in the fashionable French quarters. Domes, spires, pinnacles, elaborate wooden balconies, gables and porches appeared around St. Louis Square, along St. Denis Street and toward Lafontaine Park.

"For decorative woodwork in Montreal this was the final fling. The un-

bridled exuberance of the 90s gave way to a more austere style. Mansards and gables were replaced by flat roofs. Wooden mouldings, turnery and scrollwork gradually disappeared. By 1910 the Age of Gingerbread was over."

Westmount issued the demolition permit last Monday.

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