

This Week in the Annex:

September 13, 2023

An Uncertain Future

There's a venerable red brick building at the southwest corner of Lowther and Spadina that opened its doors to tenants in 1908. One of the first apartment houses built in Toronto, Spadina Gardens sits in quiet dignity protected by trees from the notice of most who pass by.

Its modest height and elegant presence belie its tumultuous beginnings when it was opposed through multiple legal hurdles raised by local ratepayers and subject to vitriolic attacks based on fearmongering claims of racial suicide, moral turpitude, and disease-breeding tenants. (You can [read the sorry story here.](#))

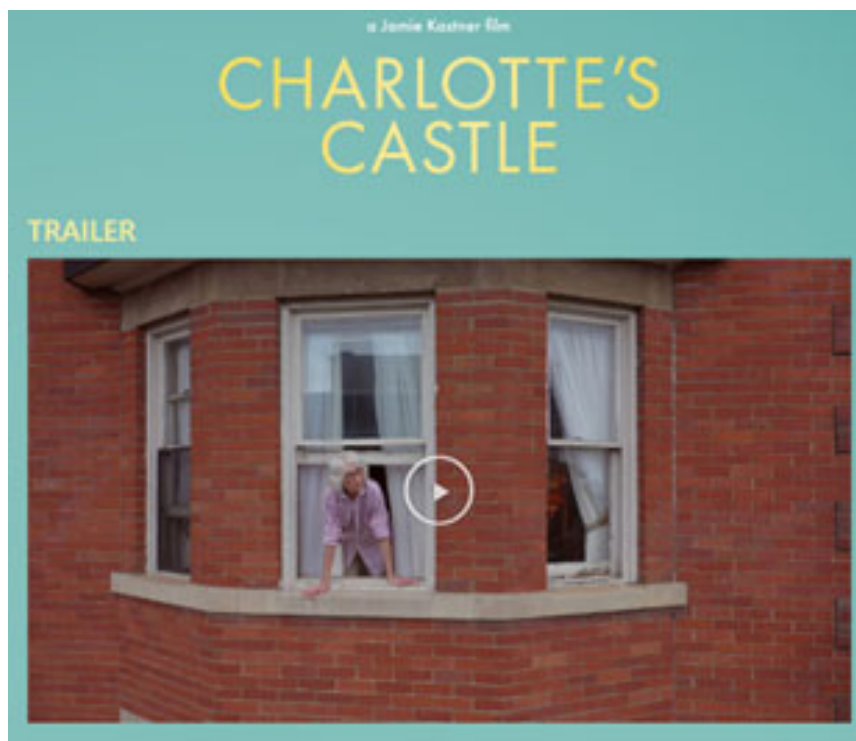
Flash forward more than a century and the building still stands – but once again under threat, this time from a developer based in the Netherlands.



A Genteel Residence

Many remarkable tenants have called the gracious Spadina Gardens apartments home over the years. Some, ironically, were A-list Establishment names like Gooderham and Massey. One of the earliest residents was Sir Henry Pellatt, the [suddenly bankrupt](#) builder of Casa Loma, who leased a suite that is quite probably occupied today by our very own Bobbi Speck of [Stop Spadina](#) fame. Over time it also became a home for folks in the arts, many of them single women, including war artist Dorothy Stevens and contralto Maureen Forrester. So you can imagine that the current tenants are fiercely protective of their building.

The story of the designation of the building is featured in a new documentary made by Jamie Kastner ([There are no Fakes](#)) that is poised to have its world theatrical premiere at the Hot Docs Cinema on **Sunday September 24th**. Fittingly, the film is called *Charlotte's Castle* after our own ARA Board member, Charlotte Mickie, a tenant in the building and a passionate advocate for its preservation.



To quote from the press package:

CHARLOTTE'S CASTLE is the story of a cultural hub's real estate borne crisis, told through one remarkable rental building and its remarkable inhabitants. It chronicles the battle of a quirky cast of unlikely activists who want to hang on to their rented homes, against a foreign-owned developer they fear will ruin a cultural landmark of which they consider themselves the caretakers.

We embarked on a cinematic journey to explore not just bricks and mortar, but the very heart and soul of our communities. This documentary is a testament to the indomitable spirit of those who've fought for their homes and the preservation of landmark housing. Through this universal story of struggle and resilience, we illuminate the broader housing crisis that touches us all. – Jamie Kastner

You can check out the trailer [by clicking here](#).

And as an added bonus for ARA members: the producers are offering us all a **10% discount on tickets** purchased for any of the Hot Docs screenings. Jamie Kastner, Charlotte Mickie and other tenants will be in attendance for Q&A after the premiere. But there are other big-screen showings if you can't make opening night.

You can buy your tickets online [by clicking here](#). To access the special discount, use code HDSPADINA10 and select Discount 10 ticket to get the offer. Hope to see you there.

Best Cornfest EVER!

The music was "fantastic" said one. The dancers were "amazing" wrote another. "Best Cornfest ever," said she who should know – that is to say, our long time Board member and ARA Chair, Rita Bilerman, who had the weighty task of stick-handling the entire affair and corralling the work force from start to finish.

The day itself began with the early morning delivery to Rita's garage of six heavy sacks of freshly picked corn from [Son-in-Law Produce](#). A team of three ARA loyalists – Gillian Bartlett, Charlotte Mickie, and Mimi Tompkins – joined her to spend a good two hours shucking the cobs in preparation for that afternoon's boil. (Why the garage, you might ask? Well, for the first time in ARA history not a single corn shucker got stung by a wasp. Reason enough to say it was the best!)

Then it was up to Jean Sibelius to set up the tables and get ready for the party. But the best way to tell you what a grand time it was is to tell the story in pictures.



For the first time ever we had a proper banner to announce the Cornfest to passersby. Huge thanks to Pat Broms who crafted the marquee and that whimsical corn cob crocheted from recycled plastic bags that you can see behind this trio of happy Annexionians.



Master Chef Jim Jacobs and assistant Steve worked like demons for two hours to keep the cobs coming -- more than 350 by one count.



Micky Fraterman buttered and served.



Terri Chu dispensed her magical homemade lemonade into participants' personal cups. One long-time ARA member thought to bring her vintage mug. Remember the old logo?



And the meal was rounded off with home baked cookies (thanks again, Rita!) and apples compliments of [Karma Co-Op](#) as well as baked goodies provided by [Cobs Bread](#).



The entertainment this year was awesome – bluegrass country meets Estonian folk dance – a [dizzying mix of cultures](#) to be sure.



The band outdid themselves – as you can see [in this video](#) of their spirited rendition of *Remington Ride*.



And the [Jõgeva Pere dancers](#) – all the way from Jõgeva, Estonia courtesy Ellen Valter of [KESKUS](#) – had the crowd totally entranced.



The membership team – Jeroen and Tija Dirks at the table with Rebecca Gimmi – did steady business while Councillor Saxe came out to enjoy the festivities, joshing here with Micky Fraterman who wanted the camera to see all those streets in the 'hood emblazoned on our official Tees.



You get the idea. It was a fantastic day. Even Mother Nature cooperated. And there are dozens more pictures of the crowd and action that you can flip through by [clicking here](#). (Thanks to the Communications team for all those images, especially photographer in chief, Mimi Tompkins.)

Of course there were many others who gave a helping hand. But we'll bring this item to a close as we started, with thanks so much to our fearless leader, Rita,

seen below at centre with Ellen Valter and our Estonian visitors. You've got to admit it, the Annex is a pretty wonderful place in which to live.

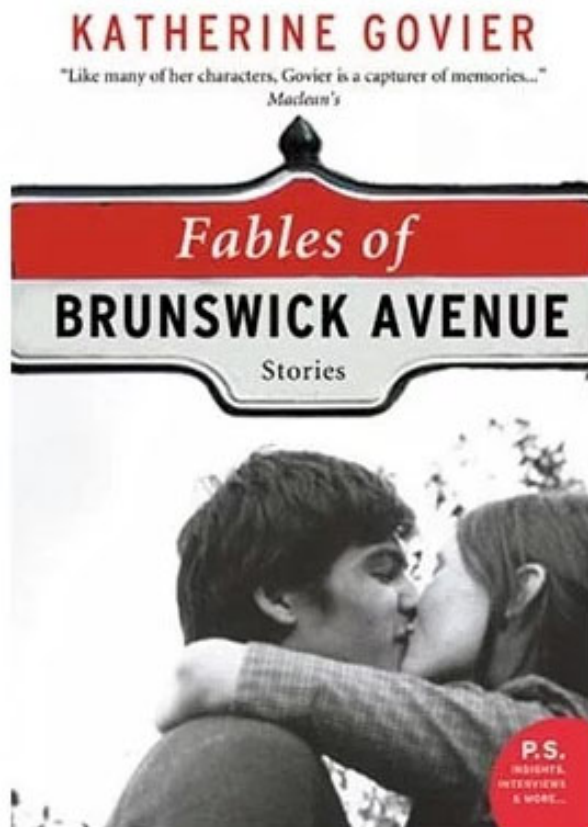


Notes and Queries

Annex Walking Tour Bonus

Those of you who participated this past summer in one of Lindsay Chisholm's *Writing Change in the Annex* walking tours know what a treat this event can be. For those who missed it, there's still a chance to sign on for the final iteration this **Saturday September 16** at **11:00 am**. As always, the tour will depart from Seaton Park (19 Albany) and end at Paul Martel Park (10 Madison) approximately 90 minutes later. Just click on this link to [pre-purchase your ticket](#).

This time, though, there's an added bonus. Heritage Toronto has arranged for the tour to dovetail with a lecture by Katherine Govier at the Spadina branch of the Toronto Public Library. Author of the charming collection of short stories, [Fables of Brunswick Avenue](#), Katherine is one of the authors featured on Lindsay's tour. [Click here](#) to learn more about her talk scheduled to start at 1:00 pm. Note that the talk is free, but pre-registration is required.



UTS Gets the Nod

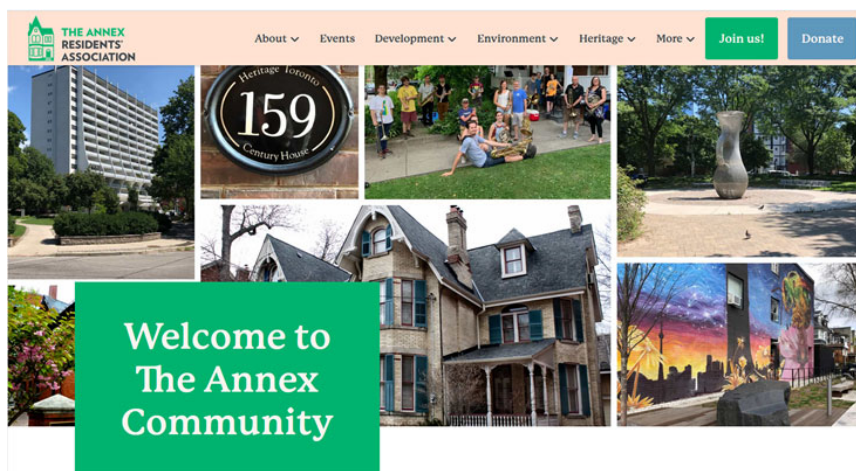
Heritage Toronto has just recently released the list of nominees for its 2023 awards. The [Built Heritage](#) category recognizes excellence through three awards: Adaptive Reuse, Heritage Planning and Architecture, and Crafts and Trades. And this year we've got a finalist close to home. The University of Toronto Schools (UTS) at Bloor and Huron has been [nominated](#) in recognition of its restoration of its heritage building while also introducing expanded learning spaces.

Winners will be revealed at [this year's gala event](#) on Monday, October 30, 2023. We'll keep you posted.



ARA Board Meets Tomorrow

After a summer recess that truly wasn't the least bit idle for many of its members, the ARA Board will resume its regular monthly meetings tomorrow night: **Thursday September 14** from **7:00 to 9:00**. Once again the session will be held on Zoom, and once again all ARA members are welcome to observe. If you're interested in attending, then email info@theara.org by noon tomorrow with the subject line "Board Meeting Sept 14," and our Secretary, Micky Fraterman, will make sure to send you the link.





The Annex Residents' Association is a volunteer organization of residents committed to improving and preserving the distinctive character of our neighbourhood. Our strength depends on our base of support in a well-informed community.

This email was sent to gillianbartlettara@gmail.com. To stop receiving emails, [click here to unsubscribe](#).

The Annex Residents' Association