

The “Fightingest” Ratepayers



Notes on ABC Residents Association and Its First Decades, 1950s – 1990s

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“The Fightingest Ratepayers” taken from the Toronto Telegram June 13, 1969

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ABCRA Logo on the Cover

This logo of three adjoining gabled houses which used to appear on ABC correspondence and newsletters was drawn for ABC by the celebrated Toronto artist Albert Franck (1899-1973) at the request of his neighbour Ellen Adams. These three houses are 77, 79, and 81 Hazelton at the south-east corner with Berryman, not far from 90 Hazelton where Franck and his wife, artist Florence Vale, made their home. Franck loved old houses and tried to capture Toronto neighbourhoods in his art before, he explained, they turned into parking lots.



Preface and Acknowledgments

As a Board member of ABC Residents Association, from the autumn of 1986 until the autumn of 2017, I was asked in the 1990s to write a history of ABC for a book on Yorkville; for several reasons, this book may never be published. These background notes which came from that research are not comprehensive since early ABC records are incomplete: As people were cleaning or downsizing, they tossed them out, unaware of their importance, but, several residents had kept some records and loaned or gave them to me. Additionally, in 1988, ABC decided to discard file material, except for minutes, because of the lack of storage space and because of Toronto's incapacity to accept this kind of material. Fortunately, ABC later had the opportunity to store its remaining records for a few years in the Community History Project offices for a modest annual fee. Several years ago, these were transferred to Toronto Archives located on Spadina Road where ABC now delivers its documents. Some material, pertinent to ABC, may also be found in Archives and Special Collections, York University, where York professor and ABC president from 1971 to 1973, Jack Granatstein, deposited his papers.

As well as consulting this archival material at York University and ABC minutes, newsletters, and other papers, such as Jean and Doug Paton's article on Aura Lee and Charles Crawford's on Marlborough written for that book, I interviewed some 25 people. These included the Jacksons, family of ABC's founder, Ingeborg Fogelberg, i.e., her daughter Ida, son-in-law Roger - the only inaugural member of ABC who is still alive, and grandson Eric. Several interviews with them, their editorial input, and the use of their archival material, most of which is now deposited with Toronto Archives, have been especially helpful.

During those interviews with current and past ABC members, it quickly became evident that ABC, like many other residents' groups in the 1960s and 1970s, contained passionate activists who relished confrontation with bulldozers, developers, and City Hall. Their excitement and their victories of the past were recaptured as they reminisced, and a longing seemed to surface with their pleasure - a longing for a time when their advocacy made a significant difference to their neighbourhood and to their City. Thanks to them all for taking the time to share their memories and their perspective.

In this adventure, I also appreciated the comments of Donna Jeffery, Shirley Morriss and Elizabeth Parr along with the advice of Barbara Moore who assisted with the layout. Thanks to Sylvia Schumacher who took on the responsibility of printing these notes.

FYI: More could be written about the early decades of ABC and, of course, about its activities in the 21st century.

2018

The Fightingest Ratepayers

Notes on ABC Residents Association and Its First Decades, 1950s - 1990s

Midtown/Downtown Toronto: The threat of developers grabbing land for outrageous high-rises! The threat of an expressway or two tearing through the neighbourhood! The reality of day-to-day commercial/residential issues in a historic area. Alerted, neighbours united. The times were right for a new ratepayers' group; in fact, the late '50s, '60s and the early '70s proved exhilarating for residents who were charged up to do battle for their neighbourhoods and their city. There was a lot at stake: careless change, thoughtless growth and development threatened to decimate midtown and downtown neighbourhoods. Those decades boasted a string of successful campaigns waged by residents that contributed to a new direction and a different face for the city of Toronto. However, this changed considerably as the 1990s saw the beginning of a building frenzy in the city: The economy was rebounding and the OMB was turning pro-development, thanks in part to Premier Mike Harris who also successfully championed amalgamation. Additionally, in an attempt to preserve GTA green space and to accommodate an increasing population, Toronto would be embracing intensification.

The Beginning of ABCRA and Its Activities

In the 1940s, a teenager envisioned tall buildings marching up Avenue Road north of Bloor Street. Naively delighted at the thought, she constantly mentioned these future high-rises to her mother and to her neighbours. But her announcements had an unforeseen effect: Her mother, **Ingeborg Rorvik Fogelberg** (Mrs. George) a Scollard Street ratepayer as well as an Elgin Avenue resident, realized that tall buildings would overshadow the nearby residential areas and alter street life forever. A few years later, Fogelberg was instrumental in founding the ancestor of ABC, the Bay Avenue Road Ratepayers' Association. Residents remember her dashing door-to-door and enthusiastically engaging neighbours in local issues. Along with this impressive energy and her tenacity and desire to improve life for residents, she was blessed with the ability to relate to almost everyone, no matter the age, status or political view.

Fogelberg's milieu, Yorkville, a working-class district at that time, was already reeling from the destruction of the Victorian houses on Cumberland Street to make room for the Bloor-Danforth subway line. The danger of other buildings being razed to provide not only parking for Bloor Street but land for high-rise developments that would tower over the Yorkville-area houses seemed real. The village would also soon experience the famous teenage/hippie invasion that brought unexpected challenges. In those early years, working together were residents and small business owners who remodelled their existing houses in harmony with their character and who were led by Yorkville's "unofficial mayor," interior designer and antique shop owner Budd Sugarman – he was honoured with a Heritage Toronto plaque in 2018 in the little park named after him on Yonge Street at Aylmer Avenue. The two groups shared a common desire: to protect the village atmosphere with its coffee houses and galleries from the encroachment of unsuitable change and invasive development. However, by the mid-1970s, this alliance had dramatically changed with ABC and the Village of Yorkville Association, co-founded by Budd, battling over the right mix of residential and commercial. The members of the latter group were concerned, of course, with the survival of their businesses.

1957: This was the year that Fogelberg and her son-in-law Roger Jackson, then a Scollard Street resident, attended the inaugural meeting of the Association; some 12 optimists gathered around the kitchen table in the home of Mae and G. Ronald Mayne at 37 Hazelton Avenue. (Both hosts became active members of the new Association and in 1967, Mae was director of the Membership Committee.) Ida Jackson, that naive and eager teenager, remembered her mother declined the presidency thinking that, in the late 1950s, a man would have more authority; the Jacksons believe that a plumber on Hazelton Avenue, probably Frank Soule at no.10, was the first president. The Association's initial resolution stated that, as taxpayers, tenants had a right to be members, not a commonly held belief at the time. Its aims were the protection of the rights of small home owners and the betterment of community life. The new organization benefited from the considerable assistance of Louis Duncan, a lawyer active in the long-established Annex Ratepayers' Association. It seems Fogelberg was finally convinced to take on the role of president or chairman from 1958 to 1964.

Fogelberg was joined in a year or two by another influential and high-energy resident, **Ellen Adams**, 51 Hazelton, who served the Association for 20 years before moving away in the fall of 1979. Her archival files at York University reveals she emigrated from Germany in 1948 and later changed her name to Adams for her run (unsuccessful) for a seat in the provincial legislature in 1963; her wide interests and involvements included those with the CCF and then the NDP where she was assistant to the provincial leader, Donald C. MacDonald and then Stephen Lewis. Admired for her common sense, good humour and steadfast persistence, she proved a strong opponent of both the Spadina Expressway which would have destroyed neighbourhoods in order to funnel suburban traffic quickly downtown as well as the proposed Greenwin apartment development next to Ramsden Park. (See **Parks**.)

Honouring Fogelberg and Adams: ABC was finally able to honour these two activists publicly, but only after several years of lively discussions with the City: On June 21, 1989, at a ceremony in Ramsden Park chaired by ABC past president, architect David Freeman, two benches and two Kentucky Coffee Bean trees were dedicated to Inga Rorvik Fogelburg [*sic*], 1898-1987, and Ellen Adams, 1925-1982. Budd Sugarman, who had worked closely with both women, and another ABC past president, historian and author Jack Granatstein, commemorated their outstanding contributions to the community and to the City. In 2017 and 2018, two new benches with plaques were installed there.

Membership: Unlike some other resident associations, membership has been open, free of charge, to all residents in the area, owners and renters alike. Until 1972, business owners and absentee landlords, since they were ratepayers, were also allowed membership. (See **Name Changes** below.) Throughout the years, supporting memberships have been encouraged in order to pay for expenses.

Name Changes: In 1968, partly because of that Greenwin development threat next to Ramsden Park, Bay Avenue Road Ratepayers joined with residents to the north of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) tracks to form the Avenue Bay Cottingham (A-B-C) Ratepayers' Association.

This liaison lasted only several years because, in December 1971 or early 1972, the residents south of the CPR tracks and those north of them agreed on an amicable separation and Cottingham withdrew, but the letter C remained now referring to the CPR tracks. In February 1972, following the trend, the Executive voted to change the word "Ratepayers" to "Residents" to exclude non-residents, i.e., absentee landlords and business owners who lived elsewhere, thus making it a true residents' association. In April 1976, the Name Committee recommended dropping the street names because they were no longer descriptive and this suggestion was approved. A vote at the 1984 AGM rejected a new name, North Midtown Area Residents'

Association, and confirmed ABC as the Association's name - as have further discussions.

Communications: While letters and notices were sent to residents from the beginning, the first newsletter is dated 7 December 1967 with Peter R. Hylton, 94A Scollard, as first editor. Other newsletters followed along with letters to residents as well as newsletters from individual streets, such as Marlborough and Scollard. Surveys and questionnaires were also distributed to residents from time to time and letters of welcome were delivered to new residents. ABC's website, (www.abcra.ca) is now an indispensable method of communication. Submissions, including photos, from residents are welcome.

Meetings: ABC has held Executive and/or General Meetings, first in the homes of various residents, then in the 1887 St. Paul's Avenue Road United Church which was deconsecrated in 1982 - it stood at the corner of Avenue Road and Webster before being burned down in 1995, probably due to arson, thus losing the splendid 1890 Art Nouveau ceiling by Gustav Hahn; at Jesse Ketchum Public School; and in the offices of the Community History Project (CHP) Heritage Centre which was steered by heritage activist and ABC's historical advisor Jane Becroft. Meetings occurred as often as necessary: For example, according to the records, at the 1971 November General Meeting it was resolved these General Meetings would be held quarterly with Executive meetings held at least once between them. A couple of months later in January 1972, ABC president Jack Granatstein suggested that the Executive should meet monthly; in 1974, 1975, and 1976, and perhaps in other years, ABC held Executive meetings every two weeks, as needed. Since the fall of 2000, many Executive or Board meetings have been held in Belmont House. The Annual General Meetings, which were permanently moved from the spring to the fall in 1976, have also been held at the Toronto Truck Theatre, aka the Mousetrap Theatre on Belmont, now demolished; Fellowship Towers, now renamed Davenhill; and recently at the Heliconian Hall on Hazelton. The Church of the Redeemer at Bloor

and Avenue Road will host the 2018 AGM in the fall.

ABCRA Constitution and Incorporation: At the February 25, 1980 General Meeting, lawyer and future president Joel Shaw, chair of the Constitutional Committee, presented to those assembled a new ABC constitution which was adopted. Incorporation followed in 1990 through the efforts of ABC president Douglas Paton with the assistance of Patricia Bell, Charles Crawford and Diane Froggatt. This meant that ABC had a legal voice at all levels of government and at the OMB. The application for incorporation stated the organization's purposes and these included: promote the best interests of the community generally; provide a forum for open discussion of matters of community interest; monitor issues of local concern; assist residents in dealing with public bodies; and promote and foster community spirit. Adjustments followed as needed and documents were redone in 2013.

Fundraising: A war chest was needed to provide financial support for ABC which would hire lawyers and planning and architect consultants for various issues. The Association held fundraising events, such as raffles, recitals at Heliconian Hall, and theatre nights. Long-time Board member Charles Portanier* of Webster Avenue assisted with these. In 1989, Doug Paton, then on Marlborough, initiated ABC's major community event and fundraiser, an annual book sale and picnic that would take place in the east end of Ramsden Park on or near June 21. This also provided an opportunity to sell supporting memberships. The increase in park and insurance fees; the disappearance of small second-hand bookstores that used to provide 40% of the sales revenue; members' burnout as well as rainy weather were the factors that made the Board decide that the last one would occur in 2009.

*A handsome elegant Brit with a theatrical flair, Charles would appear in TV commercials. Before one of our AGMs at the Mousetrap Theatre, in response to an unexpected "Ciao," he surprised us with his beautiful Italian. At his

funeral not long after this, it was revealed that he

Community Involvement: Our historian Jane Beecroft would lead walks through our area; on one along Yonge Street, she pointed out no. 850 at Yorkville, the (now closed) Cookbook Store which was once Frogley's bakery, opened in 1885, where George Weston had supposedly worked as a boy of 12; however, with Weston being born in the mid-1860s, the dates don't confirm this. Doug and Jean Paton also led walks, some of which were prepared by writer and editor Elizabeth (aka Bid) Parr. The couple indicated places of interest, including the former Pierce-Arrow Motor Car 1930 showroom at the corner of Marlborough and Yonge (it became Studebakers, a munitions factory, CBC studios, and now Staples Business Depot); one of the narrowest houses in Toronto on Bishop Street; a hidden walkway to Hazelton Avenue provided by entrepreneur Richard Wookey (now closed); and a former studio of Nimbus 9 on Hazelton, in the 1970s considered one of the best and busiest recording companies in North America known for its exceptional sound. It attracted British, Canadian, and American rockers, such as The Guess Who, Peter Gabriel, the Bay City Rollers - much to the delight of the teenie boppers who hung around, as well as Alice Cooper, who used to play baseball at Jesse Ketchum during his breaks.

had served his country working for MI6 in Italy. ABC also hosted skating parties or winter picnics in Ramsden Park. The last annual one occurred in 1977 because even the hot chocolate failed to keep everyone warm. The Association supported the Cottingham Public School Fun Fair where actor and long-time Board member Tony Parr, Elizabeth's husband, distinguished himself as master of ceremonies, and in the 1990s the Association donated money for spectacular maple trees in the grounds of Jesse Ketchum Public School. Jane Beecroft and her Community History Project organized the celebration in May 1995 of 16,000 years of Davenport Road which was once a native trail (visit Frank Stollery Parkette). Jean Paton was in charge of the ABC program which was to include her re-creation of the inaugural meeting of the Yorkville Town Council. Unfortunately rained out, this was presented a month later at the ABC book sale and picnic. For the 200 Years Yonge festivities that took place the following year, on July 1, 1996, ABC and the Community History Project co-sponsored a day of celebration with entertainment in Ramsden Park and walking tours of the neighbourhood. The final celebration of 200 Years Yonge was a skating party in Ramsden Park on Saturday, December 7, 1996.

Local Issues

The same concerns have surfaced over and over again: Traffic and parking. Noise. Garbage. Difficulties with clubs and restaurants. Illegal and illegally-lit signs: A frames, wall signs, pedestal signs, and roof-top signs (new roof-top ones are now illegal). Parks and public space, and leashed and unleashed dogs in the parks and on neighbours' lawns. Rail speed, safety and toxic spills. (There was the devastating train derailment in Mississauga in 1979 which occurred some 22 minutes from the ABC neighbourhood. Other derailments followed, including one at Marlborough in 1994 and another one nearby at Summerhill, west of Mount Pleasant Road, the following year. ABC has taken part in a federal task force and local committees on rail safety.) Heritage, and, of course, Development. More on several of these issues:

1a. Traffic et al. in Yorkville: The music jewel of Canada in the mid-1960s, Yorkville boasted over 40 clubs and coffee houses that attracted many bands along with blues and folk singers. (The Jacksons recalled that Gord Lightfoot would warm up or cool down on the veranda of their house at 118 Scollard before or after his stint at the Riverboat on Yorkville Avenue.) Thus the area lured hordes of music lovers as well as teenagers and boisterous revellers – sometimes one and the same. Go-go

dancers, head shops (that would hide drugs for pick up, for example in trees), and “massage parlours” (in front of one was spotted more than once a chauffeured limo with Queen’s Park license plates) were also in the mix. The *Globe and Mail*, March 18, 1976, in its article, “Yorkville: the was and the is,” described Yorkville in the 1960s as the Mecca “for the escapists, the drug culture, the lost, the lonely, the disoriented and the runaways.” This article also mentioned that one enterprising resident and business owner kept the steps to his store watered to prevent kids from sitting on them.

In spite of a police presence, the activity and exuberant excitement meant the loss of peace for ABC residents who were vocal about the loud music, loud speakers, loud radios, loud ubiquitous motorcycles, traffic jams, crowds of thousands, and illegal activities at night in parking lots. They wanted Yorkville cleaned up and alternative activities provided for the young. A few years later, residents were vocal about drug, noise and parking problems at nightclubs, such as the Copa at 21 Scollard, closed and then reopened as the Barracuda, and finally closed in the spring of 1996, and at The Rock Pile, aka the 1917 Masonic Temple at Davenport and Yonge. In such a busy mixed-use community it is no surprise that noise, traffic which of course included delivery trucks and sightseeing vehicles, and parking (and sadly shootings and a murder or two) have always presented a particular challenge in this part of ABC.

1b. Traffic in ABC North: As well as the noise, traffic and all the problems in the Yorkville heritage area particularly during the hippie era of the 1960s, traffic and parking along with the threat of new thoroughfares had an impact on the northern part of ABC. Residents fought to protect their neighbourhoods from expressways and their residential streets from being used as short-cuts for cars and trucks. Feisty ABC members joined in successful battles not only against the Spadina Expressway and the Leslie Street Extension but also against a possible Bay Street Extension which would have cut a wide swath through Ramsden Park in order to connect with the Crosstown Expressway; the latter was to be built somewhere between St. Clair Avenue and Davenport Road - speculation suggested south of the CPR tracks. The Crosstown would have wiped out at least one of the residential streets, possibly Macpherson Avenue. (Metro Chair Fred Gardiner reportedly commented [tongue-in-cheek?] that God would not have created ravines if He had not expected expressways to go through them.) In fact, because traffic is a continuous issue in all parts of ABC, the Association has taken part in traffic studies, and members are not shy about speaking about this issue at City Hall.

2. Development: Besides noise and traffic, ABC residents have faced perhaps their biggest concern, development. In the 1960s and '70s, ABC waged some of its best battles. Just take a look at the following headline and article that appeared in the *Toronto Telegram* on June 13, 1969:

Ramsden Park – Yorkville, THE FIGHTINGEST RATEPAYER . . . [J. Gordon Gibson] is president of the city’s fightingest ratepayers group. It’s the Avenue-Bay-Cottingham Association and you’ll find it fighting for Ramsden Park, trying to save Yorkville and battling against a parking garage on Cumberland St. . . . Mr. Gibson and his group feel the character of Yorkville will be destroyed if high-rise is allowed in the Village interior. “This is a unique area,” he says. “People like to live here because it’s convenient. It’s close to stores, schools, the museum. Something really worthwhile could be done with this area if the City would only provide some zoning stability.”

The *Globe and Mail*, earlier on April 29, 1969, had published the article, “Yorkville heads will fight” in which Pierre Berton supported the residents by urging them to put every politician on the spot about Yorkville, since it was an election year, and to mount a strong public relations campaign to save the

village. Berton continued, “Yorkville is of vital importance to everyone who uses this city. It is the hinge on which the future of this city depends.”

These and other articles, editorials, and letters to the editor in the Toronto newspapers, plus radio and TV coverage, were the result of a lively campaign and the formation in April 1969 of a “Save Yorkville Now Committee” which was “dedicated to the intelligent development of the Yorkville area.” The Committee’s letter of May 23, 1969 to the Mayor, Board of Control and City Council protested the destruction of Yorkville, in general, and the proposed construction of a 21-storey apartment hotel at the north-west corner of Hazelton and Yorkville, in particular. (“Save Yorkville” was revived in 2003 for the development at 100 Yorkville, site of the first Jewish hospital in Canada.)

The honorary chairman of this impressive Committee was architect John C. Parkin, and the chairman was ABC president J. Gordon Gibson, backed by ABC, South Rosedale Ratepayers’ Association, and the Village of Yorkville Association. The steering committee consisted of 23 stellar supporters, including the president of the Ontario Arts Council, Anthony Adamson; architectural consultant and author Eric Arthur; the above-quoted Pierre Berton; author and humanitarian June Callwood; architect A. J. Diamond; Albert Franck; Jane Jacobs; the Ontario Minister of Mines, the Hon. Allan Lawrence; the leader of the Ontario NDP, Donald C. MacDonald; the president of the Privy Council, the Hon. Donald S. Macdonald; the president of the Labour Council of Metropolitan Toronto, Don Montgomery; Rabbi Gunther Plaut; the chancellor of the University of Toronto, Dr. O. M. Solandt; and the director of the Royal Ontario Museum, Peter Swann.

Toronto chief planner, Dennis A. Barker, had warned Council that the construction of this hotel would lead to many other high-rise proposals in Yorkville. That apartment hotel was not built and the York Row Victorian houses underwent an unfortunate re-clad; this site at Yorkville and Hazelton, these Victorian houses having been demolished, does now feature a hotel. The spirited fighting nature of ABC residents and their supporters at least bought some time for Yorkville. (See the ABC fonds and other fonds in the York University Archives.)

Note: If ABC has not been able to stop all inappropriate development and hence the destruction of Yorkville, it has been able to negotiate improvements to many of them. Moreover, when projects affect more than one neighbourhood, ABC has joined with other residents’ associations, such as the Annex and South Rosedale: ABC supported South Rosedale in their successful challenge to development in the park next to the Rosedale subway station and supported them on the working committee for the Marathon development on the east side of Yonge Street.

3. Heritage Losses: ABC did face its share of losses. Toronto’s *Plan for Yorkville*, March 1968, noted that “Yorkville is unique and attractive partly because of its past” and that the best reminders of that past “should be preserved to retain the distinctive character of the district.” Attempts to save most of Yorkville’s historical and/or low-rise buildings, however, have met with disappointment. These losses included the demolition of the designated 1848 Jesse Ketchum Hall at 37 Davenport at McMurrich in 1986, and later the destruction of the 1871 Bridgland House at 100 Yorkville which had become in 1923 the first Jewish hospital in Canada, Mount Sinai. Only the facade of the 1934 addition, originally built as the hospital’s surgical wing, was saved. Some historic cottages on Belmont Street also fell to the wreckers’ hammer.

4. Parks, Ramsden: The largest park in the ABC area was named after Alderman J. George Ramsden, a Yorkville Avenue resident, when it became a park in 1904, the brickyards having been closed for

several years. This park survived an attempt in the 1950s to build a community centre and pool with the odoriferous and noisy work yard remaining; in 1960, a major league baseball stadium for 40,000 (no franchise appeared); and in 1966 and several years following, the Bay Street extension to the north. ABC members have always been tough defenders of Ramsden Park and when yet another threat appeared in the 1960s, they vigorously fought back. In 1967, Greenwin had obtained Aura Lee, the three-acre former playing grounds of the University of Toronto in a trade with the University. This land abutted the west end of Ramsden, and Greenwin had accumulated enough land for two apartment buildings but decided to construct a 29-storey apartment building plus 17 townhouses, a project approved by the City since it would be receiving in exchange 1.6 acres of the northern section of Aura Lee for the park. Residents, including our Ellen Adams and Inge Fogelberg, and supporters such as Jane Jacobs, Colin Vaughan, the League of Women Voters, and Municipal Affairs Minister Darcy McKeough, vehemently objected. At the OMB, Chair Aloysius Kennedy listened to the outraged residents and overturned the City's decision. Greenwin offered another trade: Aura Lee for the Ramsden Park work yard where the developer would build two 34-storey apartment buildings.

Once again, furious residents objected. On June 5, 1969, ABC hosted a public rally, Save The Park, which was endorsed by surrounding residents' associations; it attracted more than 3,000 people. The City ended up buying Aura Lee which was then added to the park. In 1975, residents, led by the energetic and fearless ABC director Diana Midwinter Sharpe of Pears Avenue, who had earlier been captured by a newspaper photographer confronting a bulldozer over the Aura Lee development, also fought successfully for the partial closure of Pears Avenue. This prevented its use as a throughway between Avenue Road and Yonge by cars and trucks with most of the latter heading to the problematic work yard. Of course, the closure also dramatically improved everyone's enjoyment of the park - as did the 17 cherry trees planted by Mitsubishi in 1994.

Other Parks: ABC also successfully opposed at the OMB the Toronto Parking Authority's plans for that seven-level parking garage on Cumberland Street, mentioned above in the *Toronto Telegram* article, but the battle to create Cumberland Park went on for a number of years. ABC sent delegates, including Ellen Adams in the 1970s and landscape architect and design historian Pleasance Crawford in the 1980s, to committees about this park. In the early '90s, this piece of property finally became the award-winning Village of Yorkville Park. ABC has also provided input or been represented on committees for other parks or open spaces, such as Frank Stollery Parkette, Jay Macpherson Green, Jesse Ketchum Park, Town Hall Square on the east side of the Yorkville Public Library, and of course Ramsden. Residents also assist with the spring clean-up of some of these parks.

A Wider View

Involved in City issues, ABC supported local aldermen William Archer and Ying Hope for the closure of part of Yonge Street and other streets to create temporary or permanent pedestrian malls. Here is a quotation from the letter written by Director Sarah Hoag, on behalf of ABC, dated November 1971, to Mayor William Dennison, "It is most reassuring to see that City Council is emphasizing the human element in the downtown shopping core providing a much more pleasant atmosphere for us downtown residents,

as well as those from the suburbs and other towns who make shopping excursions into this area." ABC has also engaged in many discussions over one-way streets, including one in 1987 in order to prevent one-way systems for Yonge and Bay. After having originally expressed concern over the introduction of TTC electric trolley buses, the Association eventually realized their benefits. However, it unsuccessfully championed them in 1992, and the TTC replaced them, for the most part, with diesel

buses that added to the city's pollution. In 1986, ABC gave \$500 to the Annex Residents' Association and joined it and other residents' associations in a movement called STOP, Save Toronto's Official Plan. This was a fight against the commercial and residential development of the railway lands south of Front Street which, it was believed, contravened the Official Plan's own housing standards, guidelines for maximum density, and decentralization of office space. In the 1990s, ABC successfully spoke out against Bell's application for excessive advertising in phone booths since it believed users' safety would be compromised.

Taxes: By making presentations to the provincial government, writing hundreds of letters, distributing leaflets, organizing meetings, and forming coalitions with other residents' groups and businesses, ABC helped in the successful fight against the "Metro Monster," MVA (Market Value Assessment) which assessed property at a 1988 inflated value in 1992-93. Unfortunately, this victory proved to be only a postponement.

ABCRA and Politics: Formed by activists, the Association has always been interested in non-partisan politics. However, political involvement occurred in 1972: Historian Jack Granatstein recalled that when he was ABC president, he urged the Association to take the unusual step of endorsing candidates for that year's municipal election. In his letter of November 20 [1972] to the residents, he reminded them of the vigorous fights over Ramsden Park, the Spadina Expressway, and potential excessive traffic on Marlborough Street (see Granatstein's book, *Marlborough Marathon*, 1970) and continued ". . . we feel that there is no other choice. The stakes are too high for all homeowners, businessmen, tenants and apartment dwellers." Some ABC residents had formed a search committee for good municipal candidates and, impressed with Colin Vaughan, they had persuaded him to enter municipal politics. Thus, a reform slate of candidates who would reshape the direction of the City had been endorsed: David Crombie for

Mayor, Ying Hope and Colin Vaughan for Aldermen, and Fiona Nelson for Trustee. Granatstein believed that the hard work of ABC made a significant contribution to these candidates' success in the December 7, 1972 election. However, respecting the diverse points of view in the community, in 1994 ABC reaffirmed its policy of not backing political candidates. When election time rolls around, the Association only interviews them and hosts or co-hosts them with other residents' associations at candidate meetings on the municipal, provincial and federal levels.

Megacity! One more word on politics. Those heady and exciting times of the 1960s and the early 1970s seemed to re-emerge in the mid-1990s. Many ABC members became fired up over the provincially proposed elimination of the Metro level of government and the amalgamation of the five cities and one borough. It was said that Premier Harris believed the old City of Toronto was too strong and too liberal, and he wanted to break the hold of the unions and privatize city services after amalgamation. **Rebellion!** Citizens for Local Democracy (C4LD) was formed and some ABC Board members joined and provided the Board with monthly reports; they also marched, they phoned, they wrote, they attended innumerable meetings, and they forcefully expressed their objections. This time, however, there was no good ending for those who opposed the Megacity since amalgamation brought new challenges for opponents and supporters alike. These included the Province's downloading of many services, including 100% of social housing, significantly increasing Toronto's financial burden. The new normal was stressful for everyone - residents, staff, and Councillors who were each taking over the responsibilities of a City Councillor and a Metro one. With the new Councillor's increased workload, ABC residents felt they had to choose their issues with care. In addition, they had to deal with shuffled departments, lost information, and frustrated staff. While the chaos and inefficiency gradually lessened, the financial onus remains; many still think that amalgama-

tion was a mistake. And now the Province has | intervened once again.

Additional Contributions of ABCRA

1. Service on Committees: The Association has appreciated assistance from elected officials and City staff over the years. In turn, many ABC Board members have served Toronto on City advisory or task-force committees, such as Cycling, Library, M-TRAC (Metro Toronto Residents Action Committee - on rail safety), Parks, Planning, Public Works, Toronto Recycling Action Committee (TRAC), Safety, Signage and Traffic. They have also had input on the Metro Central Library Committee, the University of Toronto and City Liaison Committee, the North Midtown Area Plan, the Police/Community Liaison Committee for Greater Yorkville, City Plan '91, the Bloor-Yorkville Toronto Urban Design Guidelines and recently the Bloor-Yorkville/North Midtown Area Planning Framework and Implementation Strategy and on Yorkville Heritage committees, including the Yorkville Triangle Heritage Study, Part II of the Official Plan: Site Specific Policy 211, and the Yorkville-Hazelton Avenue Area Heritage Conservation District Steering Committee. ABC members have also served on ad hoc committees to discuss, for example, the expansion of the Ramsden work yard in 1982 (stopped) and the establishment of Grant House, a half-way house for women who had been released from prison, in 1987 (accepted).

2. CORRA and FoNTRA: ABC has also been a long-time member of the Confederation of Resident and Ratepayer Associations (C.O.R.R.A. and now just CORRA). This umbrella and co-ordinating organization was formed in 1968 to assist its members and to deal with all issues in Toronto such as planning and development, protection of neighbourhoods, and expressways. The ABC president or his/her delegate attended monthly meetings of its Council, and ABC members also served in Executive positions: ABC president David Freeman became its president in 1971, as did Board member Rhoda Finneron in 1986. Both Ellen Adams, a founding member of CORRA, and Jack Granatstein were vice-presidents, and later Doug Paton was secretary. Dee Dyer served for many years as ABC's delegate until 2016 when CORRA held its last meeting before a hiatus. A valuable association, CORRA has had its ups and downs over the years, but after several years of revitalization, its future is now uncertain.

Colin Vaughan, whom ABC supported for City Council, was also a founding member and while the early records of CORRA seem to be lost and hence ABC's full involvement with it, some information on the group may be found in Vaughan's papers which are located in Toronto Archives. By the way, we recognize Vaughan for helping to save Yorkville's fire hall from destruction in the 1970s.

ABC also joined the Federation of North Toronto Residents' Association (FoNTRA) in 2003, another umbrella group that has been very active and effective in City issues, particularly in land use and density, in Toronto's latest Official Plan, and in OMB reform. A delegate from ABC attends its monthly meetings whenever feasible.



Who is surprised that in the ABC area which embraces such a lively and changing part of Toronto, there has been no respite for residents and the Association's Board. Fortunately, in the 21st century, ABCRA remains involved with both local and city-wide concerns. It continues to work for the best outcome on a variety of committees and with the Mayor, Councillors, City staff, and with other residents' groups. We are grateful.

ABCRA Presidents

ABC celebrates the leadership of all its presidents who came from nearly every street within our boundaries, from Scollard and Hazelton right up to Marlborough and Marlborough Place. Over the years, these dedicated volunteers contributed thousands and thousands of hours to improve not only our area, one of the busiest and most vibrant in the City, but also the City, itself. Many thanks to them as well as to their families who endured their absence as the presidents chaired or attended innumerable meetings and wrote countless reports and letters. It is to be noted that some of these family members also assisted the Association in various ways.

1957-58 ----Frank Soule?	1982-84 ----Hal Harvey
1958-64 ----Ingeborg Fogelberg	1984-85 ----Inez Maibach
1965 -----Robert McCreary	1985-86 ----Brock Wylie
1966-70 ----J. Gordon Gibson	1986-88 ----Diane Froggatt
1970-71 ----David Freeman	1988-91 ----Douglas Paton
1971-73 ----Jack Granatstein	1991-93 ----E. J. Montgomery
1973-74 ----Barton Myers	1993-96 ----Charles Crawford
1974-75 ----Beate Bowron	1996-97 ----Mary-Ann Roberts
1975-76 ----Doug MacPherson	1997-98 ----Dave Roberts
1976-79 ----Ken Fraser & Paul Jones	1998-99 ----Bill Stevenson
1979-81 ----Sheila Oxenham	1999-2001--Diane Coutts
1981-82 ----Joel Shaw	2002-04 ----John Caliendo
	2004 -----John Caliendo & Ian Carmichael

For over 60 years,
hundreds of volunteers on the ABCRA Boards
supported their presidents and their Association;
they should also be recognized
for their service.