

Inn on the Parking Lot

The Inn on the Parking Lot on the north side of Cumberland St. at #158 (presumably the Victorian houses on the south side of the street were the “parking lot” that had been cleared in preparation for the Bloor St. subway line construction) was opened by Werner Graeber sometime in 1963 with music starting as late as November of that year. Graeber, who at one point owned three coffee shops in Yorkville, was no saint; in and out of court, battling various charges between 1961 and 1965 until he was convicted and jailed for threatening a police officer. Quite the guy! That apparently brought his ownership of the Inn on the Parking Lot at least, to an end. Notably it was one of the first Yorkville coffee houses to bring rock ‘n’ roll or R&B in to replace folk and jazz (see the September through December ‘64 entries below). The “Inn” would become after closing, Charlie Brown’s, home of the Ugly Ducklings.

Updated: January 22, 2021

1963

Jan 3	Advertisements for Cathy’s Boutique at 158 Cumberland St. end.	G&M Jan 3 rd p.15
1963	Toronto Directory	Private residence, millinery (1963)
Nov 22-23	Jim McCarthy (folk singer)	Tely Nov 23 rd “What’s Going On” column
Dec 18-21 and 25(?) -28	Eve Law (comedienne)	Tely Dec 14 th “What’s Going On” column: “Eve Law’s love play David and a Christmas revue “A Inn Joke” nightly at 8:30 and 10:30. \$1.25 per person

1964

Mar 20-22	Eve Law (comedienne) and Chick Roberts (folk singer)	Star Mar 20 th p.50 (advertisement)
Feb 21-22	Eve Law and Al Cromwell "folk" singer	Tely Feb 22 nd "What's Going On" columnplay weekends
Mar 13-14	Malka and Joso	Tely Mar 14 th "What's Going On" column "... sing their "international fold tunes tonight (Sat). "Sunday through Thursday, dancing and coffee.
May 14	Les Nirenberg's Panic Button players	Star May 14 th Gerry Barker's <i>In Town and Out</i>
Mar 20-21	Carol Robinson (folk singer) and Eve Law (comedienne)	Tely Mar 21 st "What's Going On" column "
Mar 27-28	Carol Robinson and Eve Law	Tely Mar 28 th "What's Going On" column "... team up again"
Apr 3-4	Malka & Joso and Eve Law	Tely Apr 4 th "What's Going On" column
Apr 10-11	Malka & Joso and Eve Law with Pierre Berton reading poetry	Tely Apr 11 th "What's Going On" column "...a weekend club"
Apr 24-25	Malka & Joso and Eve Law with Liza Creighton	Tely Apr 25 th "What's Going On" column
May 1-2	Malka & Joso and Eve Law with Liza Creighton return	Tely May 2 nd "What's Going On" column

May 8-9	Malka & Joso and Eve Law with Liza Creighton return	Tely May 9 th "What's Going On" column G&M May 7 th p.25 "Malka and Joso scheduled to open "Zee Place" will work instead this weekend in the Inn on the Parking Lot"
May 15-16	Allan Ward Trio	Tely May 16 th "What's Going On" column
Jun 17	In an article by Jurgen Hesse titled " <i>Has the Zest Gone out of Yorkville Village?</i> "	G&M Jun 27 th p.15 . <i>Graeber says "I have one lemon (out of the three he owns), the Inn (on the Parking Lot). Later he says: "Three of four years ago you could open coffee houses with nothingbut now you have to put money into a place"</i>
Jun 19-20	Three False Knaves	Star Jun 19 th p.18 (advertisement) ... at 9:30 pm
Jun 27	In an article by Toronto Star columnist Dave Caplan	Star Jun 27 th p.24 " <i>(the Inn on the Parking Lot)... features variety entertainment, satirical reviews, folk singing etc."</i>
Jul 3-4	Malka & Joso	Tely Jul 4 th "What's Going On" column Coverage in the dailies including the Telegram becomes spotty. The Telegram then moves the venue to Thursday's After Four section
Sep 10-13	The Atlantics	Tely Sept 10 th in the "Chum About Town" listing in the After Four section: "... has gone beat with rock'n'roll and rhythm 'n' blues with the Atlantics from Thursday to Sunday
Sep 17-20	The Atlantics return	Tely Sept 17 th in the "Chum About Town" listing in the After Four section: " repeats it's message that the venue has moved to R&R and R&B
Sep 24-27	The Atlantics return	Tely Sep 24 th in the "Chum About Town" listing in the After Four section repeats

Oct 9-11	Fayne and the Cruisers	Tely Oct 8 th in the “Chum About Town” listing in the After Four section: “dance ... while you sip coffee ... this Friday and Saturday night”
Nov 13-15	Jay Walker and the Pedestrians	Tely Nov 12 th in the “Chum About Town” listing in the After Four section: “ ... seven days a week rock n’ roll in the discotheque sense is the style with ...”. “Girls no charge on Sunday”
Nov 20-22	Jay Walker and the Pedestrians return	Tely Nov 19 th in the “Chum About Town” listing in the After Four section: same promotion.
Dec 11-13	Jay Walker and the Pedestrians still here	Tely Dec 10 th in the “Chum About Town” listing in the After Four section. The “eight piece band” open seven days a week during the school holidays”
Dec 18-20	Jay Walker and the Pedestrians hanging in	Tely Dec 17 th in the “Chum About Town” listing in the After Four section, with the same advertisement
Dec 25-27	Jay Walker and the Pedestrians	Tely Dec 24 th in the “Chum About Town” listing in the After Four section, with the same advertisement, implying again they may have played all week (and Christmas?)
		With the above entry, the Inn on the Parking Lot ceases to appear here. It’s possible it didn’t survive the year.

1965

Feb 22	In an unattributed news report Werner Graeber is charged with assault causing bodily arm	G&M Feb 22 nd p.5 Graeber is referred to as a “former coffee house owner.
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Apr 8	In an unattributed news report Werner Graeber is sentenced to jail for threatening a police officer.	Star Apr 8 th p.26 Graeber is referred to as a “former coffee house owner.
Jun 10	In an unattributed news report a license is awarded for 158 Cumberland	G&M Jun 10 th p.5 site of the former Inn on the Parking lot.

The Place

The Place also owned by Werner Graeber, was located on the second floor of Mr. Smith’s clothing store at 44 Avenue Road. It was open by May 1964 and probably closed around the time the Inn on the Parking Lot closed, in or around February 1965. It appears from the UofT student newspaper The Varsity, to have been a student favourite.

1964

May 11	In a staff article	Star May 11 th p.25 Werner Graeber is acknowledged to own three coffee shops presumably including this one.
Jun 25-26	Jim McCarthy (Thursday) Chick Roberts (Friday)	Tely Jun 25 th Chum About Town listing
Jun 27	In an article by Jurgen Hesse: : <i>“Has the Zest Gone Out of Yorkville Village?”</i>	Globe Jun 27 th , p.15 the three are listed: The Place, 71 and the Inn on the Parking Lot (see also above).
Jun 27-Jul 5	Jim McCarthy	Tely Jun 27 th What’s Going On listing “ sings folk songs Monday through Sunday. No cover, no minimum.”
Jul 2-3	Jim McCarthy (Thurs), Chick Roberts (Friday)	Tely Jul 2 nd Chum About Town listing

Jul 4-7	Carol Robinson	Tely Jul 4 th What's Going On listing: "folk singer and comedian performs nightly"
Oct 2	Joni Anderson and Ron (Peaches)	The Varsity, Oct 2 nd p.18 quoting: " <i>The Place upstairs at Mr. Smith's on Avenue Road is drawing masses with featured singer Al Cromwell. Joni Anderson and Ron (Peaches) have been spelling Mr. Cromwell who is recuperating from a cold. Peaches plays a hillbilly Jamaica Farewell on guitar and mouth organ while dressed in women's clothes. His antics with noisemakers tied to shoes draw curious on-lookers and psychology majors.</i> " See also a reference to Joni Anderson at: https://jonimitchell.com/chronology/byyear.cfm?year=1964
Dec 10-13	Al Cromwell	Tely Dec 10 th Chum About Town listing: "...sings the blues from now until Sunday night"
Dec 31-Jan 3	Al Cromwell	Tely Dec 31 st Chum About Town listing: "...sings the blues from now until Sunday night" and probably has since at last the previous listing.

1965

Jan 7-10	Al Cromwell as in the preceding weeks	Tely Jan 7 th Chum About Town listing: "...sings the blues from now until Sunday night"
Jan 23	The S.S. Traditional Jazz group	Tely Jul 4 th What's Going On listing "holds forth"

Data collection: As shown, what was available was usually drawn from the three daily newspapers, by accessing the microfilmed archives of the Telegram in the Toronto Reference Library and the digital archives of the Toronto Star and the Globe and Mail. Where I take words directly from a listing I use "quotation marks" and often italics to distinguish those words from other text. Where I cite an article I reference the reporter, if possible.