



**Two houses at 424 Wellington Street West,
which were constructed in 1889.**

424 and 422 Wellington Street West (houses with the stone lions)

Both these buildings are today numbered 424.

Today, the office workers, condominium owners, and patrons of the restaurants and clubs mostly ignore these magnificent houses as they pass by on the sidewalks of Wellington Street West. However, in their day, they were two of the finest homes in Toronto.

Constructed of red brick in 1889, these three-storey attached houses possess neo-Tudor wood designs on the bargeboards in the pediments, as well as in the cornice trim along the edge of the roof. They are of heavy black wood, resembling the timbers found in a great hall in an English Tudor palace or mansion. The original slate rock roofs have survived and remain in good condition, but the front doors have been replaced. The porches also have not survived. Majestic lions repose on either side of the stairs, and there is a lion's head in a central position of the facade. Lions' heads also appear in the brickwork above the windows on the first floor. Large brackets support the cornices.

The builder of these houses was James Hewett. In 1889 the selling price was \$7600. During this same period, the row houses facing Denison Square were selling for anywhere between \$1800 and \$2500. Thus, the houses on Wellington Street West were not within the means of the average wage earner. Today, it is difficult to imagine how attractive these dwellings would have appeared when their surroundings were landscaped and the street was a grand tree-lined avenue.

The first resident of number 422 was John C. Smith, the proprietor of Cooper and Smith, Boots and Shoes. Charles Powell was the first occupant of #424. Previously residing in Hamilton, Ontario, he bought the house when he relocated to Toronto. He was the manager of the Temperance Colonization Limited at 124 King Street West. Records do not provide any details of this business, so we are left to speculate as to its purpose. In 1892, Mr. Powell retired from the company, and the city directories simply list his status as being a "gentleman."

On the evenings when these families entertained, the gaslights were visible from the street, filtering softly through the darkness. On these occasions, men and women in formal attire alighted from their horse-drawn carriages, their laughter and animated conversations betraying their excitement at being entertained in such regal surroundings.

Today, the homes appear rather empty and forlorn. The spacious front lawns have been paved over to provide parking spaces. Though not evident from the street, the houses have been combined and are employed as banquet rooms for receptions and weddings. The original marble fireplaces and the staircases with their hand-carved banisters survive, as well as the gas fixtures, although the latter are no longer in use.

The glory days of these homes have long since been spent, but anyone with an imaginative eye can still experience their past importance in the Toronto scene.