

Clarence Street, Ottawa: Contemporary Change in an Inner City 'Zone of Discard'

John E. Tunbridge

Volume 14, numéro 3, february 1986

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1018082ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1018082ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine

ISSN

0703-0428 (imprimé)

1918-5138 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer cet article

Tunbridge, J. E. (1986). Clarence Street, Ottawa: Contemporary Change in an Inner City 'Zone of Discard'. *Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine*, 14(3), 247–257. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1018082ar>

Résumé de l'article

Le coeur de l'agglomération de Bytown, avant que celle-ci ne devienne la ville d'Ottawa et la capitale du Canada, constitue le quartier que l'on connaît actuellement sous le nom de Basse Ville. A mesure que la ville gagne en importance, le développement se déplace vers le quartier du centre-ville, au sud de la Colline parlementaire, et la Basse Ville périclité pour devenir une classique « zone grise ». Ces dernières années, les quartiers anciens laissés à l'abandon dans de nombreuses villes de l'Amérique du Nord subissent des mutations profondes : c'est généralement là que l'on trouve les plus anciens édifices de la ville, qui constituent de précieuses ressources. Ce texte traite de l'évolution de la rue Clarence et permet de mettre en perspective les transformations qu'elle a subies à l'époque contemporaine; principalement par l'examen du tronçon à vocation commerciale. La thèse principale de l'article indique que les mutations fonctionnelles attribuables à l'actuel réaménagement de ces zones grises n'entraînent pas nécessairement une transformation absolue de leur environnement socio-économique et, en particulier, de leur structure de contrôle socio-économique.

Clarence Street, Ottawa: Contemporary Change in an Inner City 'Zone of Discard'

John E. Tunbridge

Résumé/Abstract

Le coeur de l'agglomération de Bytown, avant que celle-ci ne devienne la ville d'Ottawa et la capitale du Canada, constitue le quartier que l'on connaît actuellement sous le nom de Basse Ville. A mesure que la ville gagne en importance, le développement se déplace vers le quartier du centre-ville, au sud de la Colline parlementaire, et la Basse Ville périclité pour devenir une classique «zone grise». Ces dernières années, les quartiers anciens laissés à l'abandon dans de nombreuses villes de l'Amérique du Nord subissent des mutations profondes: c'est généralement là que l'on trouve les plus anciens édifices de la ville, qui constituent de précieuses ressources. Ce texte traite de l'évolution de la rue Clarence et permet de mettre en perspective les transformations qu'elle a subies à l'époque contemporaine; principalement par l'examen du tronçon à vocation commerciale. La thèse principale de l'article indique que les mutations fonctionnelles attribuables à l'actuel réaménagement de ces zones grises n'entraînent pas nécessairement une transformation absolue de leur environnement socio-économique et, en particulier, de leur structure de contrôle socio-économique.

The principal focus of early Bytown, before it became the City of Ottawa and the capital of Canada, was the area now known as Lower Town. The elevation of the city's status led to a refocussing of development in the Centre Town area, south of Parliament, and Lower Town ultimately subsided into a classic 'zone of discard.' In recent years, such zones of discard in many North American cities have experienced a considerable renaissance, since they typically possess the oldest buildings remaining in the city and, as such major resources. This paper examines the evolution of Clarence Street, and puts its contemporary change into perspective; the focus is primarily upon the commercial section of the street. The central thesis to emerge from the paper is that the functional change now occurring in such revitalizing 'discard' areas does not necessarily imply a total change in their socioeconomic environment, and in particular their pattern of socioeconomic control.

The Context

The principal focus of early Bytown, before it became the City of Ottawa and the capital of Canada, was the area now known as Lower Town.¹ The elevation of the city's status led to a refocussing of development in the Centre Town area, south of Parliament, and Lower Town ultimately subsided into a classic 'zone of discard' (Fig. 1). Such areas typically occur in the wake of migration by a city's central business district, and they have been theoretically modelled as environments of commercial and residential delapidation, in which rooming-houses, 'red-light' districts, low-grade stores,

warehouses and parking lots (*inter alia*) abound.² Such would be a reasonable description of much of Lower Town, particularly the mixed-use area of Lower Town West, by the 1960s.

In recent years, however, such zones of discard in many North American cities have experienced a considerable renaissance, since they typically possess the oldest buildings remaining in the city and, as such, major heritage resources — a striking redefinition resulting from the contemporary conservation ethic.³ Lower Town West, particularly its core in the Byward Market, has become a focus of urban revitalisation parallel with Gastown in Vancouver, Vieux Montreal and numerous others across Canada. The process of revitalisation was begun by the National Capital Commission on Sussex Drive (Fig. 1) in the 1960s and has been furthered

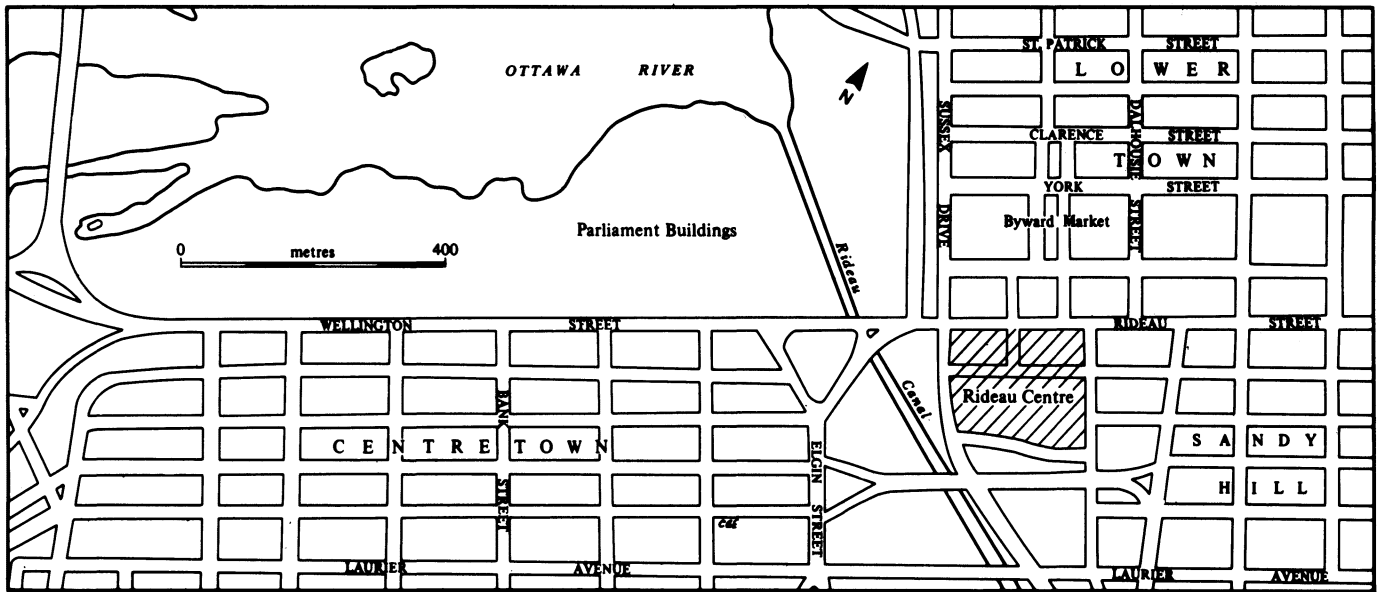


FIGURE 1. Clarence Street, Ottawa: Location

by the City of Ottawa and a host of private entrepreneurs since that time.⁴ In functional terms, the process involves the displacement of low-grade commercial activities by boutiques, restaurants, taverns and a complex of retail-service activities that is currently termed the 'festival market' type by the development industry;⁵ it also involves the displacement of poorer residents by new commerce, parking and (selectively) gentrification, a process which raises interesting cultural issues in Ottawa's case since the departing residents may prove to be more francophone than the elite invaders.

Among such changes is a fascinating functional conflict that is being waged on the fringes of the Byward Market area, on streets which are relatively marginal in terms of heritage or aesthetic quality, and on which a 'victory' for the forces of contemporary change is not such a foregone conclusion as it has been in the core heritage area of Sussex Drive and the Market proper (which has received major public stimulus and is also more accessible from the new Rideau Centre shopping-convention complex, *Fig. 1*).⁶

Clarence Street epitomises this functional conflict, which is simultaneously a cultural conflict between a lower class and elite/chic milieu. In the recent past Clarence has contained a heterogeneous collection of stores — second hand furniture, cheap barbers and junk stores arrayed alongside fashionable restaurants, ladies' boutiques and smart photographers. The 'invading' stores have sought to market the street with advertisements which paper over its contradictions;⁷ and by summer 1984 it was apparent that the upgrading of the street was succeeding, the pre-existing functions being nearly 'defeated' after some five years of conspicuous discordance.

This process of transition raises a fundamental question: has Clarence Street experienced a century of twilight existence, recently upset by revolutionary change, or is contemporary change only the most recent stage of a dynamic, perhaps complex, evolution? It is the purpose of this paper to examine the evolution of Clarence Street, to put its contemporary change into proper perspective; the focus will be primarily upon the commercial section of the street.

The central thesis to emerge from the paper is that the functional change now occurring in such revitalising 'discard' areas does not necessarily imply a total change in their socioeconomic environment, and in particular their pattern of socioeconomic control. While this paper is ostensibly about a single, relatively peripheral, street it concerns a phenomenon currently visible throughout the western world. The detail of Clarence Street's evolution will have at least comparative relevance to similar revitalising environments in other Canadian cities. Beyond the detail, however, is the general point that contemporary change is a complex process, and appearances can be deceiving with respect to what is changing and who is gaining or losing in consequence.

The physical character of the street, and its heritage quality, are background issues from the perspective of this study. The city planning authorities have identified only about a dozen buildings of heritage interest, as against practically the whole of Sussex Drive and the Market area, and much of the adjacent streets (York, Murray and St. Patrick).⁸ Clarence Street has experienced many fires and much demolition in the past, with quick and poor-quality reconstruction the rule,⁹ leaving it with relatively little more than an intangible old-world character. Such a physical backcloth might

have lent itself easily to a functional and social decline, but has evidently not precluded contemporary revitalisation.

The basic data sources employed here are Might's Directory of Ottawa, and its predecessor,¹⁰ together with fieldwork and a telephone survey for recent years. These are supported by insurance plans¹¹ and aerial photographs¹² (clarifying ambiguities), the 1984 assessment rolls (land ownership and tenancy data) and other primary sources,¹³ and existing documentation.¹⁴ From these sources the evolution of the street will be traced across the century preceding contemporary change, with respect to its functional and social character. Further analysis will look at contemporary change relative to what immediately preceded it, and will seek to determine how great a break in continuity is involved. This entails closer reference to the decade up to late 1984 (the time of writing), including the contemporary pattern of land ownership.

Functional Change on Clarence Street, 1874-1981

Existing documentation indicates that Clarence Street already had a generally low status in the late nineteenth century: there were frequent street brawls, and the city's prostitution has been centred upon western Clarence from Ottawa's foundation to the present time.¹⁵ This was originally symptomatic of a frontier lumbering community, accommodating transient raftsmen; however, the early character could well have evolved continuously, following eclipse by Centre Town, into the specialised zone of discard of the modern city.

Table 1 summarises the commercial structure of Clarence Street for selected years, focussing upon its commercial core area (Fig. 2). Deriving the changing *character* of a street from documentary data is beset by a fundamental difficulty: neither decay nor revitalisation can be simply read from the functional categories into which commercial activities are customarily placed. There are, however, some diagnostic indicators of condition: detailed photographs, a few functions that unequivocally reflect a street's character, and recently-visible concerns that can be traced back through the decades.

The City Archives contain some photographic evidence of the poor condition of early Clarence stores, and newspaper references used by Newton tend to support this image. Two diagnostic activities are second-hand dealers, and miscellaneous repairmen. The latter group is likely to locate in low-rent environments; they are superficially few but in fact augmented by the various hardware-related activities which come and go through time (blacksmiths and carriagemakers giving way to hardware stores and garages). There is also continuing reference, though chiefly at the western end of the street, to warehouse and wholesale activities, which have become characteristic of the zone of discard.¹⁶ Most other functions have traditionally been small, low-order businesses; their premises remain visible, and a number of

TABLE 1

Commercial Activity on Clarence Street and its Central Area (Parent-Dalhousie)

Year	CLARENCE ST: Goods retailing	CLARENCE ST: Comm. services	CLARENCE ST: Other commercial	PARENT-DALHOUSIE: All goods/services ret.	PARENT-DALHOUSIE: Second-hand dealers	PARENT-DALHOUSIE: Repair activities	PARENT-DALHOUSIE: Other goods retailing	PARENT-DALHOUSIE: Clothing (excl. 2-hand)	PARENT-DALHOUSIE: Food stores	PARENT-DALHOUSIE: Restaurants	PARENT-DALHOUSIE: Hotels, boarding houses	PARENT-DALHOUSIE: Other services (comm.)
1883	(30?)	(16?)	—	25	7	2	7	2	3	—	1	3
1901	19	18	5	16	5	1	3	—	2	1	2	2
1921	27	17	2	27	11	1	5	1	4	1	—	4
1941	21	17	7	26	4	2	7	1	5	3	—	4
1961	22	12	10	22	1	2	11	—	3	1	—	4
1981	15	10	6	18	1	—	3	6	3	2	—	3

Notes: 1) Up to 1883, outlying stores are not clearly distinguished from residential occupiers' employment.

2) 'Other goods retailing' may conceal further second-hand and repair activities (e.g. smiths).

businesses still survive from the early twentieth century, or did so until recently. Apart from a second-hand store, low-price barbers¹⁷ and furniture stores (largely second-hand) clearly suggest the poor quality of the commercial environment from which they sprang.

The second-hand dealers are the clearest evidence of a dowdy century on Clarence Street. Table 1 indicates that they appear consistently from 1883 (and in fact from 1874). It is striking that, in the interim years, they approach *half* of the commercial establishments in the main (Parent-Dalhousie) retail area (1921: Table 3). This phenomenon is the more remarkable since the directories indicate that Clarence and (intersecting) William Streets dominate the second hand trade not merely in Lower Town but in the entire City of Ottawa for most of the century in question. This activity must depend on low land values and a relatively poor adjacent population; but it is a specialisation of function which suggests that something more is involved — some further dimension which may shed light not only upon this study area, but perhaps upon similar environments in other cities.

Reference to commercial activities over time does therefore reveal a thread of continuity across a century, which is now in the process of being severed. The contemporary change associated with physical revitalisation is in fact a revolutionary break with the past, in terms of function. But can we associate functional with social patterns, and have these necessarily been supplanted by the recent changes?

Social Change on Clarence Street, 1874-1981

The directory listings were examined with respect to the number of household heads and store operators, and the ethnic origin of their names; these data are selectively summarised in Table 2.¹⁸ Household names, when in obvious association with others of their kind (including given names), are fairly convincing evidence of cultural change on Clarence Street over time, and are quite consistent with the broad evolution of ethnic origins recorded for Lower Town West by successive censuses.

TABLE 2
Clarence Street: Household Names
by Ethnic Origin (Generalised¹⁸)

	1883	1901	1921	1941	1961	1981
French	58	75	99	165	129	108
British*	71	45	48	40	28	53
Jewish	1	3	30	28	20	8
Other European	3	5	8	7	8	11
Oriental	—	2	1	2	2	9
TOTAL	134	131	186	243	187	185

Note: 1) *Mainly Irish in 19th Century; 6 Irish names in 1981.
2) 1971 total = 160
3) By 1981, commercial occupants significantly non-resident.

The ebb and flow of total population, and of the main ethnic groups involved, at once negates any sense of stagnant continuity — even if this ebb and flow may have occurred in a channel of low social status, until the present time. The 1878 Insurance Plan indicates that by then the street was almost fully developed (West of King Edward); however, many residences were less than two storeys,¹⁹ and this level of development evidently lasted several decades since the street's inhabitants essentially plateaued between 1881 and the First World War period. Thereafter the names continuously increase to a peak in the Second World War period; in addition to some enlargement of houses, this can be associated with the introduction of low-rise apartments. This residential expansion occurred primarily east of Dalhousie (Fig. 2). Subsequently, the population steadily declines until the 1970s, when the construction of two high-rise apartment blocks permits a renewed increase despite residential displacement elsewhere on the street.

Note that rooming houses, a characteristic feature of zones of discard, appear in 1961 and increase to seven by 1981. A parallel symptom is the growth of parking lots; air photographs indicate the concurrent growth of small informal parking spaces also. Nearly all this spread of parking space was at the expense of earlier residences, and increasing residential vacancy from the 1960s made the transition somewhat easier to effect. The advent of a fire station in the 1960s, a space-consuming land use also characteristic of a

zone of discard, was a further erosion of the established residential environment (Fig. 2).

However long-standing the low-income status of Clarence Street, its demographic decline is clearly a phenomenon of post-war decades, during which of course suburbanisation reached its peak, and the negative impact of this upon the inner city permitted the fullest expression of a discard environment in the shadow of the central business district. The high-rise apartments have subsequently boosted the number of 'WASP' names on the street and could probably be linked with the contemporary revitalisation process. In 1981, however, any demographic revival²⁰ was still a patchy affair; and census tract 054, including essentially Lower Town West (and Clarence Street excepting the easternmost block) exhibited decidedly negative socioeconomic characteristics such as high unemployment, high dependence upon poorly-paid service employment, poor education and a low proportion of university graduates — the latter being a most sensitive index of inner city gentrification.²¹

Turning to the ethnic mix within this demographic pattern, Table 2 indicates that the study period witnessed important changes of detail, rather than comprehensive invasion by or displacement of ethnic groups. The franco-phone population grew from a minority to dominance by 1901, a position which it has held throughout the subsequent changes in the total population. The early dominance of British names does not reflect 'WASPs' nearly so much as Irish, well-documented as a founding group in Lower Town.²² The other elements in the street's history include sprinklings of German, Italian and Chinese names, and recently a few Vietnamese and other Orientals whose further expansion may be inhibited by the current revitalisation. But only one group significantly disturbs the Franco-British mainstreams of the area: the past European names which identify a Jewish population.

The Jewish element becomes significant by 1911; it is very highly clustered in most years, leaving little doubt as to the interpretation of names. The principal cluster developed in the main commercial section of the street; even more remarkable than the clustering of second-hand dealers here is the virtually complete takeover of this trade by a solid phalanx of Jewish names by 1921. The unprecedented concentration of second-hand dealers on Clarence and William Streets by 1921 suggests conscious locational decision-making by a closely-knit cultural group.

Jewish settlement in the Clarence Street area appears shortly after the late nineteenth-century pogroms in Eastern Europe, and its rapid concentration in this area reflects cheap accommodation adjacent to the immigration reception centre, then above the old Byward Market building facing Clarence Street.²³ Being denied much other employment (especially in government) by language and the constraints of their religious observances, Jews sought trades requiring

little overhead; the second-hand trade was favoured since it had an established local and rural market,²⁴ now augmented by the influx of immigrants. The well-known credit system operating within the Jewish community permitted their heavy trade participation and encouraged its close mutual proximity. Second-hand dealerships also lent themselves to husband and wife teamwork, in which the former collected goods as a pedlar and the latter sold them; the family could live very frugally in the traditional accommodation above the store. Clarence Street became part of the wider takeover of Market-area trade by Jews, some of which continues, notably on Byward Market Square itself.²⁵ Involvement in the clothing trade benefitted from links with the Jewish garment trade in Montreal, and involvement in the food trade was stimulated by cultural dietary needs; these and other Jewish businesses have also appeared on Clarence Street over the years.

The Jews did not initiate the second-hand trade in Ottawa (French and British names dominate before 1911) but its development and locational concentration may owe much to their cultural characteristics as well as to the inherent 'discard' quality evolving on Clarence Street. They continued to dominate the trade until (after 1961) it ceased to appear in the directory listings. The 1981 census indicates that few Jews continue to reside in Lower Town West, but many remain in adjacent census tracts 051 and 052 (Sandy Hill). These contain two of the largest concentrations of university graduates and high incomes in the city and are eloquently suggestive of the success (for many) of Market-area enterprise.

Whether the Jewish community continues to own and profit from the sites on Clarence Street which their businesses once dominated is, of course, a question to be investigated. It raises the wider question of how far the functional changes of revitalisation do in fact represent the displacement of people, capital and profit that they appear to do.

Commercial Continuity before Contemporary Change

This section is concerned with how the evolving character of Clarence Street translates into the continuity, or otherwise, of specific businesses and activities in the years immediately preceding contemporary change. From this we can determine the degree to which the latter constitutes a revolutionary departure from, or evolutionary continuity with, the patterns of business that went before. This may well provide insight into such commercial transition elsewhere. The discussion centres on the northern frontage of the street between Parent and Dalhousie, which has remained the focus of retailing and, through its structural continuity, has permitted uninterrupted evolution of a small-store milieu.

The invasion of contemporary activities had scarcely begun by 1971, which is thus used as a benchmark year of expected continuity with the past. The traditional character of the street had been disturbed only by two boutiques, from the late 1960s, which were soon replaced once more by traditional uses;²⁶ it was evidently premature to seek a 'halo effect' from the revitalisation underway on nearby Sussex Drive. In Table 3 each commercial activity on the continuous northern frontage in 1971 is dated in terms of its first appearance in the decennial data sets employed in this study. Given the enduring traditional character of the street, it might be expected that individual stores in 1971 were family businesses potentially extending back at least as far as the main ethnic group involved — still the Jews. If not, subsequent contemporary change may appear as simply another phase in a continuous process of change.

Of the seventeen active businesses, ten had appeared since 1961; superficially, then, the evidence does not suggest strong threads of commercial continuity to 1971. It may be noted, however, that all of the newcomers at that time were functions which fitted easily into a poorer quality commercial environment, and most of them display a more specific functional continuity with the kinds of activities that had long characterised the street. 'Ye Market Book Shoppe' breaks the pattern less than its apparently-chic name suggests: a fortuitous photograph in Newton²⁷ shows the store with its blinds half drawn and a just-decipherable notice reading 'adult books — magazines — novelties'!

Functional continuity may be very general only; it may be specific on the same site through different owners; and there may be continuity of ownership migrating through different sites in the vicinity, reflecting changing details of tenure, commercial need or opportunity. The latter case is manifested by J.E. Martin Paints and Wallpapers, which appears to be a newcomer; however, careful checking of earlier directories reveals that the business had simply moved from No. 75 to No. 81B, having been at the former address since before 1951, and that No. 75 had in fact been in continuous use as a paint store since 1911, and as a hardware store since 1901.

The seven long-settled enterprises are mostly hardware/repair or second-hand related activities. Two are furniture stores, both recently visible and largely second-hand; one (Ralphs) replaced a locksmith before 1951, the other (M & K) appeared by 1951 but is a derivative of Kufsky, second hand dealer, who occupied the premises in 1941. The store in question, No. 87, has an astonishing pedigree as a second-hand/related store back to at least 1883; having recently tried to associate itself with contemporary change, it continues through 1984 but is in difficulties through the demise of its traditional supportive environment and the comparison shopping which it permitted.²⁸ Once again, a superficial change is in fact disguising a functional continuity of at least

TABLE 3
Clarence Street, Parent To Dalhousie (North): Business Continuity To/From 1971

(1961 activity where different)	Street No. (as of 1971)	1971 Business	First data year present	(1977 occupant)	1984 Business (from)
(Hardware store/ sub-P.O.)	67	Dave's Pump Service	1971	→ CONTINUING	A. de la Plante, Photog. (1981)
(Locksmith/gen. repairs)	71	Top Hat Valet Cleaners	1971	→ (Expansion)	A. de la Plante, Photog. (1981)
(Paints & wallpaper)	75	Capital Fish	1971	→ CONTINUING	→ CONTINUING
*	77	Ralph's Furniture Store	1951	→ CONTINUING	→ CONTINUING/VACANT (end '84)
*	81	M. Baylin, Tinsmith	1941	→ CONTINUING	→ (Restaurant Expansion) (end '84)
	81A	Ottawa Kosher Meat Mkt.	1951	Kristin Way, L. Boutique	→ Claire de Lune, Rest. (1982)
(Kosher food)	81B	J.E. Martin, Paints/Wallpaper	1971°	Lizzie's Doll House	→ Ad Lib, Ladies Boutique (1980)
*(Dry goods)	85	J. Adams, Variety Shop	1971	VACANT	→ Cotton Ginny, L. Boutique (1979)
*	87	M & K Furniture & Stoves	1951°	→ CONTINUING	→ CONTINUING
*(Restaurant)	89	India Café	1971	Asian Restaurant	→ Café Bohemian, Rest. (1977)
*(Wholesale vegetables)	91	Rideau Plumbing & Heating	1971	Life House, Health Food	→ (Restaurant Expansion) (1981)
*					
*(Used furniture)	97	Ye Market Book Shoppe	1971	Jeannette Bookstore	→ Altho, Men's Boutique (1981)
*	101	A. Hanser, Second Hand Shop	1921	→ CONTINUING	→ CONTINUING
	103	Clarence St. Barber Shop (N. Lang)	1931	→ CONTINUING	→ CONTINUING
*(Real estate/insurance)	109	VACANT	—	Allied Task Force, Empl. Agency	→ Morningstar, L. Boutique (1979)
*(Watchmaker/repairs)	111	VACANT	—	Phoenix, 2nd hand clothing	→ Louly, L. Boutique (1980)
(Ontario Medical Supply)	113	All Can. Addit. Servants, Empl. Agency	1971	The Only Kite Store	→ Holden's Travel Agency (1983)
(Barn/pumping equip. — diff. name)	115	Dick Mannion Pump Service	1971	Byward Used Furniture	→ Holden's Restaurant (1980)
	119	Torontow Hardware/Tinsmith	1931	→ CONTINUING	→ Justicia, L. Boutique (1981)

Note: ° See text — * Second Hand Dealer in 1921 (Some numbering discrepancies).

a century; since at least 1921 that functional continuity has been in Jewish hands.

At least six of the seven longstanding businesses are Jewish-owned,²⁹ a cultural dimension reflected specifically in the Ottawa Kosher Meat Market. The most enduring are mutually adjacent in Nos. 101 and 103. Abraham Hanser's second-hand dealership took over by 1921 from a French-Canadian second-hand enterprise dating from at least 1901. Nathan Lang immigrated from Poland in 1923; his shop remains a somewhat faded landmark on the street in 1984 and he continues to serve a declining Polish-language market at very low prices.³⁰ Nos. 101/103 occupy one of the oldest, and currently most decrepit, buildings on Clarence Street, possibly dating from 1843;³¹ morphologically, functionally and socially, therefore, it constitutes a rare monument to the past, and commercial revitalisation can ironically only serve to reduce its heritage significance.

Thus the superficial change shown in Table 3 actually masks a rather striking functional continuity to 1971 (and in some cases to 1984). A picture emerges of enduring, generally low-grade functional types, with impressive continuity of some individual businesses, even though the historically-

dominant second-hand trade was fading well before 1971. Things are not always as they seem; the student of commercial revitalisation is well advised to look beyond the simple change of business names.

The Jewish cultural dimension has clearly lent colour and cohesion to this particular commercial assemblage through most of its history, but generally not to the extent of resisting functional change when it ultimately transpired that profit maximisation lay in a new direction. The question of continuing Jewish participation in the current era of change will be considered below.

Contemporary Change on Clarence Street (through 1984)

The environment of slowly evolving functional continuity on Clarence Street has been disrupted in recent years to the extent that over three-quarters of the stores on the street are now unequivocally 'contemporary,' as against one in 1971. The dynamics of contemporary change have included a degree of instability among the newcomers, whereby some have disappeared or relocated; and adaptation by some traditional functions to serve the new market of leisure-seekers

and vacationers. Definition problems can bedevil the study of commercial revitalisation, especially since the character change may be intangible; on Clarence Street, however, most changes have been clearcut and dramatic, and it is possible to examine the antecedent and subsequent businesses as essentially discrete groups.

The contemporary stores now dominating the main retail frontage are identified in Table 3, with the date of their appearance. Of those still present, the oldest dates from 1977, with the invasion clearly peaking in 1981-82. They are dominated by ladies' clothing boutiques, in which field Clarence Street now has a specialisation reminiscent of its second-hand past, and evidently dependent upon a similar comparison – shopping principle.³² Significantly, two are affiliated with Toronto-based firms through franchise arrangements; though these are virtually the only external chain connections presently on the street (excluding the Atrium, below) which may well be less than contemporary change usually entails. In addition to the photographer,³³ menswear boutique and health food store, others that might be described as hardware and book boutiques were present until recent months. Three of Ottawa's most fashionable eating places are now on this frontage, providing respectively French, quiche-style and pub-type fare; one has been a restaurant location for several decades, but there is no reason to believe that even its 1971 manifestation (India Café) was in any way 'chic,' since modest ethnic restaurants have been part of our urban scene for many years. It is noteworthy that the travel agency is a recent offshoot of one of the restaurants.

Since most of these businesses came in a wave in the early 1980s, this frontage was a 'functional battleground' for a very brief period of its long history, after which only isolated survivors of its former character remained. One traditional function has successfully adapted, however: Captain Fish appears to have found a newly-chic status as 'Ottawa's seafood specialists,' along with other speciality food stores in the adjacent Byward Market proper.

The opposite frontage of Clarence Street (between Dalhousie and William), although less cohesive, has also played a significant role in contemporary change. One noteworthy heritage building³⁴ (Nos. 110-112), formerly containing first-floor residences and a traditional barber, was rehabilitated in 1983 for boutiques selling ladies' and children's clothing and a specialist nail studio,³⁵ all small units which match those on the northern frontage. A more distinctive change is the conversion of the adjacent bakery into a delicatessen, since it illustrates a logical adaptive reuse of spacious premises and an enterprising adaptation of their traditional function. Another space-consuming contemporary use, a bagel bakery/restaurant involving Jewish enterprise, was constructed on a vacant site in 1980, and later extended into the rear of a former department store. In contrast to these newcomers, a medical supplies store has maintained a stable business in the vicinity for 45 years.

The western end of Clarence Street (Parent-Sussex; Fig. 2) is morphologically and functionally miscellaneous; nonetheless it is playing a significant part in the process of change.

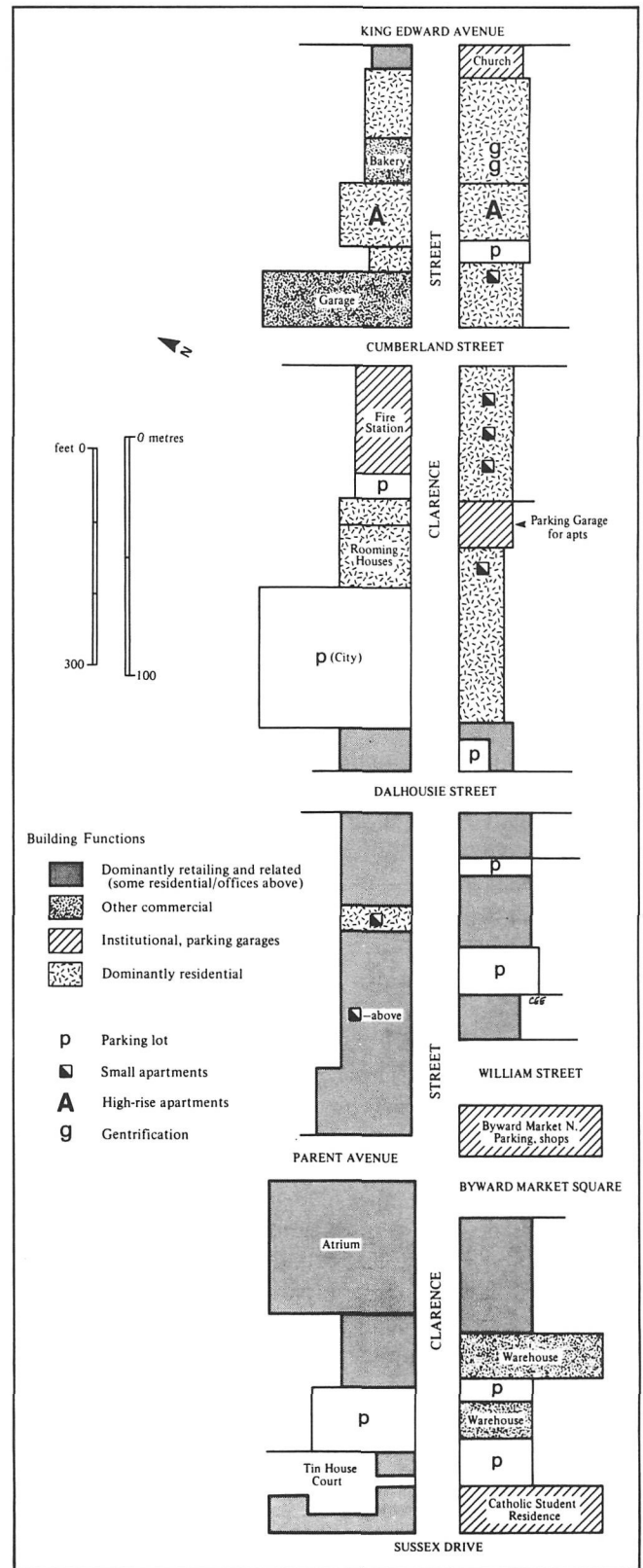


FIGURE 2. Clarence Street, 1984 — Generalised Land Use (Sussex to King Edward¹⁸)

The southern side contains classic 'discard' uses: an institution, longstanding parking lots, two warehouse premises and a seedy tavern with a colourful reputation; it experienced no significant change for two decades, but in 1984 an old supermarket on the corner of Byward Market underwent conversion into an avant-garde furniture store — again, a rational adaptive reuse of spacious premises.³⁶ The northern side contains a coffee house and a health food store; both owe their success to an environmental factor, since they back onto a courtyard (Tin House Court) restored by the National Capital Commission (N.C.C.) in the mid-seventies. Adjacent uses, however, include an N.C.C. parking lot, a pornographic bookstore and another long-established barber; until 1981 these were neighbours of the most notorious premises on the street, the Chez Lucien Hotel, longstanding centre of the city's prostitution trade.

The Chez Lucien Hotel displaced or absorbed several smaller commercial establishments during the 1950s. It epitomised the kind of low grade hostelry which had existed in Lower Town West, and especially at this end of Clarence Street, since its inception as a lumbering community.³⁷ It is of particular significance to this study in that its redevelopment constitutes the most dramatic single character change on Clarence Street, and possibly in the entire inner city. The replacement building, the Atrium, opened in the summer of 1984; it is a four storey mixed office-shop-restaurant facility, the accent being upon food and drink provision (giving some functional continuity with the past, in the broadest sense). It is the work, and now the office base, of a nationally-prominent developer.³⁸ The scale of investment involved must partly reflect the 'halo effect' of the nearby Rideau Centre, which opened in 1983. This was developed as part of a wider Rideau Area Project, which involved road alterations and landscaping in Lower Town's streets, including Clarence which enjoyed widened sidewalks and attractive street lamps by 1984; the project is an ongoing effort to integrate the Rideau Centre with the Byward Market and Lower Town revitalisation more generally. This being the case, it is no longer realistic to attribute new investment in the area to the attractive power of the latter alone; it is caught up in a larger momentum process. The net result of the Atrium for Clarence Street has been the sudden insertion of four new restaurants and a variety of other businesses;³⁹ from an examination of change in existing stores we are suddenly projected into a condition of rapid retail growth and potential market overkill, adding a further dimension of interest to ongoing contemporary change.

How does the contemporary business on Clarence Street overall relate to the wider revitalisation in Lower Town West? Although part of a wider entity focussed on Byward Market, Clarence Street is generally perceived as a distinct unit within it. The new businesses have marketed it as such in joint advertisements and as noted above it has been the focus of magazine articles. In interviews, new business proprietors repeatedly referred to the sense of camaraderie that exists

among them, and there were several suggestions that the street's environment similarly influenced its inhabitants old and new, with a degree of likemindedness and business cooperation developing between the two groups. On the other hand, the contemporary businesses tend to share with their peers on other streets the intense specialisation which marks them all as 'festival market retailing'; this is borne out in their regular individual advertisements and descriptions in *What's On*, the monthly tourist/leisure guide, which also clearly identifies the intended market in which their specialisms seek a secure niche.⁴⁰ The clothing boutiques on Clarence illustrate this well; so did Food for Thought (recently moved to William Street) which projected its bookstore as specialising in food and fitness. How such individual specialisation compares with the past businesses, of Clarence Street and the Market area generally, would be an interesting matter to pursue.

However, it appears that the morphology of Clarence Street is a significant influence on the specific kinds of new business which seek it out, and the perceptions which their owners subsequently develop. Aside from the Atrium, Clarence is primarily an environment of small stores, designed for modest businesses in a traditionally poor area; thus it has proven well suited to small newcomers of the boutique type.⁴¹ External chain connections are very few thus far; instead, small low-overhead concerns have found a toehold here, which is borne out by some early business failures and by interviews with some who succeeded.⁴² This contrasts with adjacent York Street, which contains a variety of larger buildings and sites well suited to large chain/franchise restaurants (there are presently at least seven)⁴³ in addition to its more central location. Clarence Street's contemporary functions are more similar to those of William Street, with which it formerly shared the second-hand trade. It differs again from Byward Market, however; here the morphology is similar, but the businesses remain almost entirely specialist food stores, and one must look to the policy of their common landowner for an explanation.⁴⁴ Herein lies an important clue to the character of contemporary business on Clarence: the street has inherited from its humble past both a small-scale morphology and a fragmented pattern of ownership. Both factors appear to have abetted its development as the dominant boutique location of the Market area.

The dramatic invasion of western Clarence Street by contemporary functions gives the impression that its time-honoured assemblage of people and activities has been defeated and dispossessed, with the established order abruptly turned on its head. But who in fact has instigated and profited from the change? The city's assessment rolls for 1984, supplemented by interviews with tradespeople and landowners, provided a complete picture of tenancy and ownership on Clarence Street west of Dalhousie. This picture at once deflates any notion that some major social injustice has occurred.

Of the several types of tenant-owner situations (Fig. 3), the most striking is the number of outgoing tradespeople who owned and have retained their property for rental to the

newcomers. In certain cases the older tradespeople have remained on part of the property and rented part; it transpires that the photographer's store (Nos. 67-71) was owned by the seemingly humble shoe repairer whose business lingered in its shadow, around the corner on Parent Street, until his recent death. The interviews revealed a consistent picture: the older merchants were well aware of the changing market in the 1970s and were moving to profit from it as they saw fit. Some sold to investors but more stayed on until the rental market was ripe, in some cases offering monthly leases in the expectation of rapidly rising market rents. This accounts for the ephemeral nature of some stores, including early newcomers, which were low-overhead operators and in some cases failed to keep up with the growing rent demands as revitalisation of the street proceeded. The invasion of new functions is therefore certainly not the unwelcome disruption to existing merchants that it appears to be, even though a few among them may have misjudged the market or (like Nathan Lang) been caught in an untenable rental situation themselves. It is no surprise that most of the owners involved are identified as Jewish, and it is widely commented upon that most of the Market area property remains in Jewish hands, after many of their businesses have withdrawn. A particularly interesting case is the Slover family, the termination of whose department store permitted them to rent to a series of contemporary functions on York (Mother Tucker's chain restaurant), William (including Food for Thought bookstore) and Clarence Streets (Bagel-Bagel bakery/restaurant).

Other ownership categories include (Fig. 3) continuing traditional enterprises which own their own premises; a few contemporary enterprises which have succeeded in purchasing their premises; two renting from the National Capital Commission; and a number of (mostly new) businesses which rent from small investors usually with a few other holdings in the Lower Town area. These investors have all purchased property from 1979 on, directly or indirectly from previous merchant-owners who opted for an early sale. There is no suggestion from their apparently candid interview responses that corporate capital from beyond Ottawa is involved, other than through the mortgage mechanism; whether this is the case in locations more central to the Byward Market is, however, another question. In one instance (Nos. 110-112) the investor bought and rehabilitated for more extensive retail use, as noted above. In another, a former Jewish link has reappeared: a barrister recently purchased Nos. 81-85 because he once lived above them and ate at the former kosher food store.

It is apparent, therefore, that there has been less transfer of ownership and profit than of function, and that the limited transfer of ownership is in favour of other Ottawa residents more usually than the new merchants themselves. The Jewish link remains strong and profitable, even showing sentimental reappearances. The key to future change on Clarence Street is primarily in the owners' hands, and it is

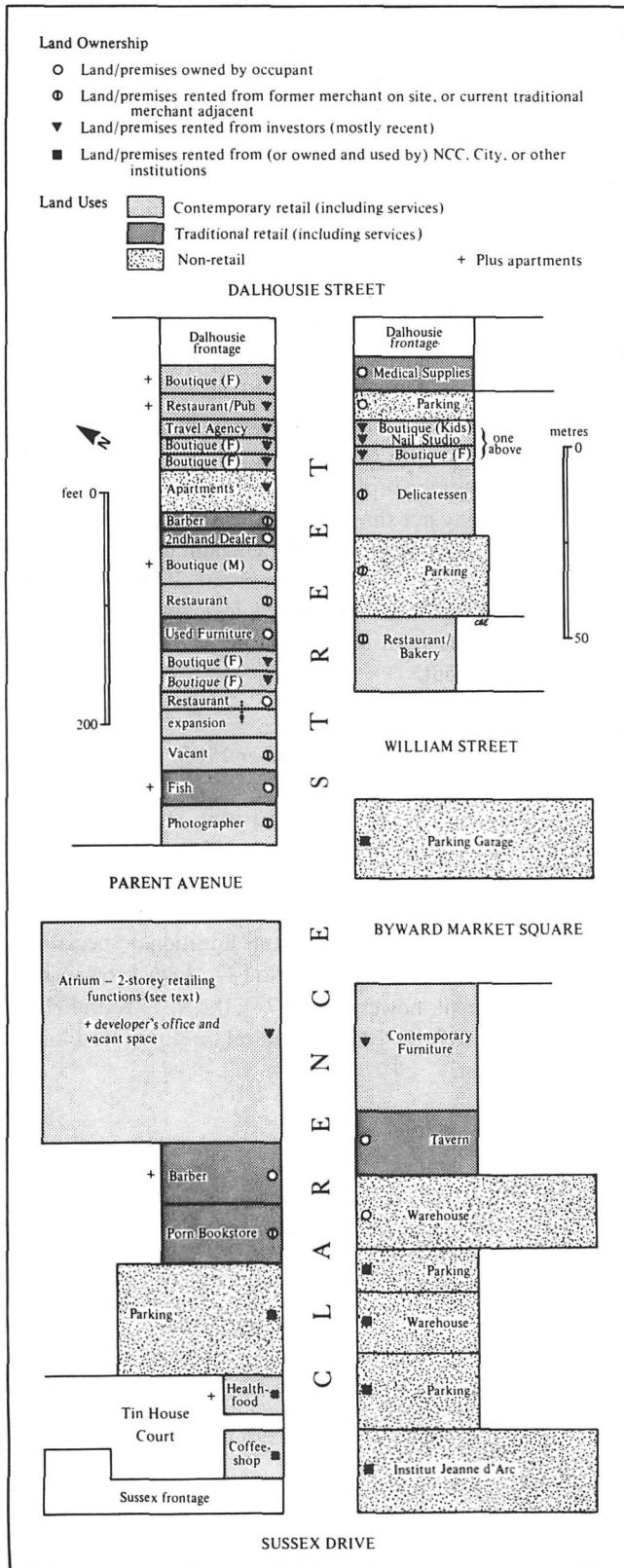


FIGURE 3. Clarence Street, West, 1984 — Land Ownership and Use

highly significant that the remaining traditional functions in the main retail area are entirely in the hands of two Jewish merchant-owners, who have both the experience of their peers and favourable current circumstances to induce them to withdraw in favour of rental to new functions. In 1984 the increase in rents on York Street encouraged some merchants to move out, thereby enhancing the rental market on the more peripheral streets.⁴⁶ By year's end, the Hanser property (Nos. 101-103) was advertised for rent; an acceptable offer will extinguish both the second-hand store and tenant Lang's barber shop. M & K is unlikely to stay on at the expense of improving rental opportunities since its business is admitted to be declining and is in any case subordinate to another store elsewhere in the inner city.⁴⁶ Aside from Capital Fish and Ontario Medical Supplies, therefore, it appears unlikely that the remaining traditional functions in the retail core of Clarence Street will survive another year.

The eastern half of Clarence Street (Dalhousie-King Edward) remains essentially residential; in view of the fact that gentrification is now proceeding in Lower Town West, it would be reasonable to expect signs of it here. It is part of the overall process of contemporary change: commercial and residential upgrading in the general area are mutually reinforcing, as the wording of residential real estate advertisements clearly reveals. Field examination identified only two gentrified residences on Clarence (Nos. 228 and 230, see Fig. 2),⁴⁷ however, and the principal real estate company dealing in the area was not promoting any residential properties on the street as of November 1984.⁴⁸ Some houses have already been eliminated; the existence of R7 (apartment) zoning at the eastern end of the street may discourage further gentrification there; and there is a range of alternative houses on the streets to the north. Should the momentum of revitalisation be maintained, however, further change in the residential status of Clarence Street might be anticipated since it possesses several early homes of potential heritage significance.⁴⁹

Conclusion: Contemporary Change and the Zone of Discard in Perspective

To draw together an integrated perspective on contemporary change on Clarence Street is not easy: there is no simple answer to the question of how dramatic a break it constitutes with previous patterns. In functional terms the break is unquestionably sharp, particularly from a long-term perspective, and the recent opening of the Atrium underscores this most forcefully. In social terms, however, the impact of change is more equivocal. The population of the street has always been in a state of flux, and remains so, the present ebb and flow of the older elements *vis-à-vis* the 'yuppies'⁵⁰ appearing perhaps less dramatic than the influx of Jews at the beginning of this century. Patronage of the street's businesses has changed markedly, in line with functions, however; and here the 'yuppies' are much more

prominent, according to consistent responses from businesses interviewed. But ownership of property, with the influence on future development that this implies, has shown no dramatic change in the face of functional trends; rather, the ability of an established group of former resident owners to turn contemporary change to their advantage is a central finding of this study. Updating the concept of the zone of discard to embrace the morphological, functional and human facets of contemporary change would appear to be no simple task, even on the evidence of a single case study; small wonder that it has yet to be attempted.

Do these findings have wider significance? In general, yes: they show clearly that the subtleties of contemporary change cannot be read from appearances alone. In detail, their significance must partly depend upon local environmental characteristics. Clarence Street has mostly small retail structures which favour certain types of reuse, and a marked preponderance of one cultural group among their traditional owner-occupiers. Other revitalising 'discard' environments may not share this pattern of small merchant-owners with, perhaps, a cultural penchant for profit maximisation; in which case such commercial change elsewhere may be occurring with very much less advantage to the existing occupants than is the case here. It would be very pertinent to find out.

Postscript (September 1985)

Contemporary change continued in its established path during 1985. Significant changes included revitalisation work on a warehouse (No. 24 — Fig. 3), conversion of low-grade apartments (No. 105) to three contemporary retail uses including a Belgian restaurant, and additional specialised restaurants in the Atrium and No. 77. Jewish ownership remains prominent, however (e.g. 77); the M & K and Hanser properties (87 & 101-3) still retain their traditional functions — just.

NOTES

1. See, *inter alia*, M. Newton, "The Search for Heritage in Ottawa's Lower Town," *Urban History Review*, IX (October 1980): 21-37.
2. See (e.g.) G.A. Nader, *Cities of Canada, Vol. 1: Theoretical, Historical and Planning Perspectives* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1975), 104-6.
3. See L.R. Ford, "Urban Preservation and the Geography of the City in the U.S.A.," *Progress in Human Geography*, 3 (1979): 211-38. Discussion of Canadian examples may be found in Nader, *Cities of Canada, Vol. 1* and *Vol. 2: Profiles of Fifteen Metropolitan Centres* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1976), and extensively in the periodical *Canadian Heritage*.
4. National Capital Commission, *Bytown: A Guide to Lowertown Ottawa*, 4th ed. (Ottawa: National Capital Commission, 1981) espec. 35-7. The City's principal contributions have been restoration of the Byward Market Building: sympathetic zoning provision; heritage area designation, improvement and proposed controls; and coordination of the Rideau Area Project. See Planning Branch, Dept. of Community Development, *Central Area Fringe Area Study: Northeast Quadrant*,

- Byward Market-Sussex Drive Sub-Area* (Ottawa: City of Ottawa, 1981), espec. 59-62 on Clarence Street.
5. J.R. Bullock, Executive Vice-President of Cadillac-Fairview Ltd., *et alia*, Community Revitalization Conference, Saint John, N.B. 10-12 October 1984.
 6. See Planning Branch, Dept. of Community Development, *Fringe Area Study*; Rideau Area Project Team, *Rideau Area Project Newsletter* (ca. 1980-83).
 7. Anon., "I Found It at Clarence Street" (advertisement), *Ottawa Magazine*, (August, 1981): 45; also C.A. Kong, "Clarence Street Chic," *ibid.*, 16-17.
 8. Planning Branch, Dept. of Community Development, *Central Area Heritage* (Ottawa: City of Ottawa, 1977).
 9. M. Newton, *Lower Town Ottawa*, Vol. 2: 1854-1900, Manuscript Report 106 (Ottawa: National Capital Commission, 1981), Ch. XIII "Clarence Street: The Raftsmen's Turf."
 10. *City of Ottawa Directory* (Ottawa: Woodburn, 1874-75, 1883; Might, 1891-92 et seq.). The 1874-75 directory is the first containing detailed street listings; thereafter the closest directory to each decennial census year was examined, as available in the National Library.
 11. *Insurance Plan of the City of Ottawa* (Ottawa: Chas. E. Goad Co., 1878), Sheets 17 and 21; *Insurance Plan of the City of Ottawa* (Toronto and Montreal: Underwriters' Survey Bureau Ltd., 1956), 206-7. Available in the National Map Collection, National Library/Public Archives, Ottawa.
 12. Available at the Dept. of Energy, Mines and Resources, Ottawa.
 13. Assessment rolls and photographic material are located in the City of Ottawa Archives, 174 Stanley Ave., and census enumeration material and published documents in the National Library/Public Archives, Ottawa.
 14. M. Newton, *Lower Town Ottawa*.
 15. *Ibid.*; and personal communication, November 1984.
 16. Most clearly identified in the *Insurance Plan* of 1956 which indicates considerable development of the warehousing function since its predecessor in 1878.
 17. A haircut cost \$3.50 at N. Lang's barber shop, November 1984!
 18. The twentieth-century extension of Clarence Street east of King Edward is purely residential and is disregarded in this study. N.B. In later years some stores are ethnically unattributable, where they do not bear the merchant's name.
 19. Newton, *Lower Town Ottawa*, indicates that some of these were still pioneer cabins.
 20. The long term trend in *number of people per household* is still almost certainly negative, in light of census data for Lower Town West overall and documentation of wider trends in Ottawa and other Canadian inner cities. See D. Ley, "Inner-city Revitalization in Canada: A Vancouver Case Study," *Canadian Geographer*, XXV, 2 (1981): 124-148, espec. 125-7.
 21. *Ibid.*
 22. See, *inter alia*, National Capital Commission, *Bytown*; M. Newton, *Lower Town Ottawa*.
 23. S.L. Goldberg, *Economic and Social Aspects of the Location of Jews in Ottawa (1891-1931)*, B.A. Honours dissertation, Dept. of Geography, Carleton University, Ottawa, 1976. Sources include L. Rosenberg, *Chronology of Canadian Jewish History* (Montreal: Canadian Jewish Congress, 1959) and other works.
 24. The early significance of rural patrons of the Byward Market to Clarence Street merchants is also noted by Newton, *Lower Town Ottawa*, 875.
 25. See K. Benzing, "40 Years of Cornering the Market," *The Citizen*, Ottawa, 6 November 1984, D1/3; N. Levine, "In Lower Town," *The Citizen*, Ottawa, 22 December 1984, Cl. NB: the only family photograph in the Ottawa City Archives is of a Jewish family on adjacent York Street in 1913.
 26. At 85 and 91 Clarence; one replaced by a plumbing/heating engineer by 1971.
 27. M. Newton, *Lower Town Ottawa*, 879.
 28. Interview with M. Kufsky, proprietor, November 1984. He had earlier advertised with the contemporary stores (Anon., "I Found It").
 29. S.L. Goldberg, *Economic and Social Aspects*.
 30. Interview with N. Lang, November 1984. He is little patronised by the new trade on Clarence Street, but feels a cultural commitment to the old.
 31. M. Newton, *Lower Town Ottawa*, 881. If so, it is the original building on the lot.
 32. The boutique proprietors claim that their clustering is mutually beneficial in attracting a larger overall market, even though they each have detailed specialisms; mutual assistance and socialising also.
 33. Dave's Pump Service moved to a cheaper location in Cyrville, E. Ottawa, to make way for Allen de la Plante in 1981. See C.A. Kong, "Clarence Street Chic."
 34. M. Newton, *Lower Town Ottawa*, 850, plus. A modified late-19th century brick/frame structure of the street's second cycle of development.
 35. Chrissie's, upstairs. Serves a market "from prostitutes to diplomats" (interview with proprietor, November 1984).
 36. ZIP. A Quebec/Ottawa chain, with two suburban stores in Ottawa, 'pioneering' and inner city location. (Interview with Ottawa director, December 1984).
 37. M. Newton, *Lower Town Ottawa*, 863. Starr's Hotel was absorbed into the new Chez Lucien in 1953 (p. 869).
 38. Teron. See *The Citizen*, Ottawa, 6 November 1984. D1.
 39. The ten existing businesses (November 1984) include a health food store (Jewish-owned), flower shop, small newsagent/tobacconist kiosk and an associated complex of two restaurants and a bar; all of which are Ottawa chains, more or less prominent. There are also a Japanese restaurant, bakery/cafeteria and (upstairs) glassware and native arts stores. A gourmet delicatessen/supermarket and a further bar/restaurant are pending, plus ca. ten vacant retail spaces.
 40. *What's On/Voici Ottawa-Hull*, espec. 27 (October 1984).
 41. Note that the only contemporary stores to have expanded beyond their original premises so far are three of the restaurants.
 42. Especially D. Bray (interviewed November 1984), owner of Cotton Ginny, who has subsequently opened a second store in the Rideau Centre.
 43. Including the Old Spaghetti Factory, Keg'n Cleaver, Mother Tucker's, Old Fish Market, Hurley's, Houlihan's and Guadalaharry's.
 44. Loeb (grocery wholesaler) is one of several Jewish landowning dynasties in the Market area (M. Newton, personal communication and D. Bray, interview cited).
 45. The quadrupling of rents on parts of western York Street by the National Capital Commission in early 1984 drove Domus, an established contemporary domestic-wares boutique, to Dalhousie Street. See "Byward Market," *The Citizen* supplement, 30 April 1984, 41.
 46. Interview with M. Kufsky, proprietor of M & K, November 1984. He is now acting as caretaker on behalf of his son, who operates the main store.
 47. Evidence for gentrification includes cleaned brickwork, new woodwork, lanterns and other trimmings, new European cars. Note that there are gentrified apartments above Nos. 15 and 110 Clarence (contemporary stores).
 48. Victoria Island Realities Ltd., personal enquiry.
 49. M. Newton, *Lower Town Ottawa*.
 50. Young urban professionals, so labelled in general U.S. parlance. The proprietor of Holden's restaurant referred to his market as 'yuppies', as distinct from the older local residents.

Acknowledgements: The author gratefully acknowledges the interest and willing assistance of nearly all merchants and landowners consulted on Clarence Street, from whom very many insights were derived; very helpful comments from John Taylor (History, Carleton) on the final draft; and Chris Earl, Tara McCreery and Marie Kerridge for cartography, initial and final typing respectively.