

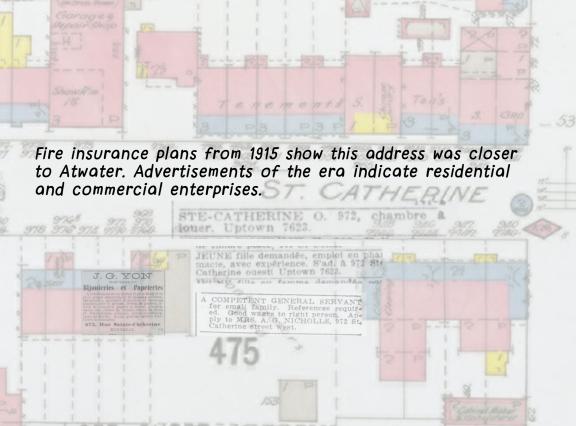
For Lisa, Camille, Sonia, Amber, Freddie, Luna, Pussycat, Rebecca, Sabrina, Kia and Ava.

FAU du Sexe unde

The history of a single address is truly fascinating.



Let's take for example, the address 972 Saint Catherine West in Montreal.



GRANDE chambre avec cuisine e chambre de bain. 272 Ste-Catherine C Uptown 4706. 160-7

By 1926, the address where 972 Saint Catherine West would come to be renumbered in 1980 was between Metcalfe and Mansfield. A fire insurance plan from this era shows Venus Sweets Ltd occupied the building, and another shows it did until 1957. Rental ads from 1926 and 1928 indicate there was housing in this building, though this is inconsistent with records. These ads must have been referring to the address's former location.

ST.CATHERINE WEST

This fire insurance plan from 1915 shows the address that became 972 in 1980 was 444 in the 1910s.

If you look at the plan on the previous page, you will notice that the underwriter crossed out the former addresses all around it. This plan was amended until 1940.

Aside from sprinklers, which are of course always noted in a bold S on fire insurance plans, in 1915 it appeared to be empty.

429

430

Though I use many tools to explore the history of an address, my preferred method is searching through archived newspapers for want ads and entertainment advertisements. I also scour eBay for old matchbooks for the businesses that occupied the location. These are so precious as they are often all that is physically left of these spaces. Again, the first time 972 St. Catherine W makes a verifiable appearance in any public record I have found since its first incarnation closer to Atwater is in 1980. This was verified by ads for the stripclub Seduction, which existed for less than a year.

BUSINESS MEN'S LUNCHEON

972 ST. CATHERINE ST. W. 866-0935

I'm interested very specifically in commercial properties where sex work took place. You see, these sites, as vital as they are to Montreal's economic and cultural profile, are often just completely demolished when the business closes for good and the license is lost to anti-sex work bylaws. These sites are important to me because they are part of my history as a woman in Montreal.

972 Ste. Catherine Ouest is very important to me. 1255

It's August, 2022. I'm standing in one of the showrooms of Moore's Clothing for Men at 966 Saint Catherine West. White display tables feature neatly folded sweaters and dress shirts. Chrome garment racks are filled with a variety of suit jackets. The season is changing from linen to wool. The ceiling is covered in decorative copper tiles. The swivel track lights are fixed on male mannequins posed self-confidently in formalwear. The hardwood floors are stained a dark walnut. This wasn't always a suit store, but there have definitely been "suits" in here for many years.

Well actually, the more appropriate metonym would be jeans and hockey jerseys.

Yup, there's been a lot of jeans and hockey jerseys in here. From around 1987 to 2008, this was the stripclub Le Château du Sexe. The entranceway and the address, which was 972, no longer exist, and because of this, and also because the giant sign that obscured the building's greystone facing has been removed, it's difficult piecing it together. Like where was the door? What happened to the mirrored, neon lit staircase? One thing you realize when doing these types of architectural investigations is that doorways come and go and so do addresses. These are not fixed entities.

Moore's has also taken over the downstairs and upstairs spaces to the east of the Château. In the early 1980s the upstairs (968) was the Beat, a popular alternative nightclub whose doorperson was the extremely glamorous Montreal trans icon Michelle DeVille. In the late 1980s it was the Penthouse stripclub with its famous entranceway made of parted nude fibreglass legs. The top of the entrance was...well I guess in architectural terms it would be called a draped arch but the drapes were buttocks with a panty-covered vulva in the middle. Anti-sex work feminists hated this entrance. They thought it was objectifying to women.

By the 1990s, 968 was Cabaret les Dolls. At one point in this location's stripclub history there was a plexiglass shower onstage, definitely making the most of the Flashdance craze. This plexiglass shower remained there long after the shower show trend was in vogue. This happened a lot in clubs. You'd find remnants of the previous era's fads covered in dust in a corner or jammed with old shoes and costumes.

VEST

I never worked at this club, but I did see Big Fannie Annie here in the mid 1990s. Big Fannie Annie was a famous and beloved fat stripper. Somewhere in a box at my dad's house there is a Polaroid of me snuggling into her giant beautiful boobs.

GROSVENOR HOUSE

I did however, work next door at the Château du Sexe. I started working here just two months after the Metallica riot at the Olympic Stadium in August of 1992. In March of 1993 I celebrated my 25th birthday here. I was working here when Kurt Cobain committed suicide on April 5th, 1994 and I danced to Nirvana that night and much to the chagrin of the other girls, many others nights, too.

As I stood in the showroom, I mapped out the space. I guess I looked weird with my notebook and recorder and a young employee came over to ask if I needed any help. I told her I studied architecture and was just trying to get a sense of the inside of the building, which I described as "historical". "This place was actually a stripclub before," she told me. I didn't tell her I knew this, and that we were standing exactly where the stage used to be and that I had been completely naked right in this very spot for a good part of my twenties.

I remembered the dressing room up a narrow flight of rickety grey carpeted stairs and one of its major inconveniences being the fact that the famous Legs from next door were stored in there after they'd been torn down and replaced with something less audacious. I remembered tripping over them and running my stay-up stockings on their ragged fibreglass edges.

Ironically, change rooms had been put in front of what was once the doorway to this dumpy third floor sanctuary.

And of course I also remembered the second floor roof off the dressing room, where we would go and smoke cigarettes and pot in the cool night air, wearing nothing but heels and g-strings. I remembered my stilettos sinking into the tarred roof as I hauled on a joint. I wondered if those stiletto marks are still there. They might be the only evidence left of the Chateau du Sexe. Like paw prints on ancient Roman roof tiles.

These now disappeared locations are a critical part of the history of women's labour in this city.

These small, sometimes dingy clubs once located all over the island were often the only places that would hire fat girls, and weird girls, and older women. They would hire more than just one or two Black and Indigenous women. Women with precarious migration status could often find quick work in these spaces. You could simply walk in off the street with your duffle bag and if the roster was looking sparse, be onstage within an hour. When I was a stripper if you worked in the fancier clubs you weren't allowed tattoos, as these were associated with bikers' old ladies, and if you did have them, you had to cover them. Even the tiniest ones. We would use Dermablend, which is what drag queens used to cover their beards, too.

It was also good for bruises. It was available for purchase at The Bay.

Now, one thing you should know about any club in Montreal is that the club you are standing in is definitely not the first one that has been there, even if it feels like it's been there forever. I knew that the Chateau was not the first club that had occupied this location, or at least I had speculated that its business model had changed over the years.

For example, why was there an enormous kitchen in the back, that really only got used when the cops would come in and card dancers?

At some point, there must have been food served here.

"Venus Sweets, Limited"

Notice is hereby given that under Part I of the Quebec Companies Act, 1920, letters patent have been issued by the Lieutenant-Governor of the Province of Quebec, bearing date the sixth day of December, 1922, incorporating Faul Gouin, Edouard Tellier, barristers, and Alphonse Authier, accountant, all three of the city and dis-

And what was the story behind the public washroom on the third floor that had remained untouched décor-wise since the 1950s?

cally 50s? general, pastry, sweet meats, jams, crushed fruits and syrups, ice creams, aerated drinks, soft liquors, confectionery and confectioners supplies, in all forms and processes of manufacture and to carry on the business of general caterers or any other business, whether as manufacturer, merchants or otherwise, which may seem to the company capable of being conveniently carried on in connection with the above or calculated directly or indirectly to enhance the value of the company's property or rights;

RESTAURANT ET GRILL VENUS

Latest Night Spot Off To Good Start

E MONDE MARCHE...

LE PUBLIC ... ET

LES MODES CHANGENT ...

A very handsome cocktail Loung going under the name of the Venu de Milo Room got off to a goo start last night on the upper floo of the Venus Restaurant. It has been decorated in the best moderate for such places and promise

As it turns out, that kitchen may have been installed as early as the 1930s, when the Venus Restaurant and Grill opened in 1936 on the first floor. It may have been used to serve food at the Venus de Milo Room, which opened on the second floor in 1949, though this was primarily a cocktail lounge and bar. The Venus de Milo Room was around until the 1970s. This was the space that came to be 972 in 1980, and from there on, housed several stripclubs. (Though I would bet 5 bucks there were topless dancers featured from time to time at the Venus de Milo, as there were in so many cocktail lounges in the early 1970s).

970 rue Sainte-Catherine Ouest (vis-te-

OUVERT JOUR ET NUIT

s en tout temps ... à des prix raisonnables.

Chez Marc Paul 972 Ste-Catherine ouest, Montréal 866-0935

> This kitchen would have been used to serve food during the business men's lunch when the club was Seduction for less than a year in 1980. It would have been used to prepare the buffet for

patrons of Bar Select pour Hommes Chez Marc Paul between 1983 and 1985.

Tous les jours de 23h à

fine incluant Grand Marnier et Cognac 2\$ Danses aux tables: 3\$

DANCING AT YOUR TABLE UPON REQUEST

972 ST. CATHERINE ST. W. 866-0935 OPEN 11 A.M. to 3 A.M.

ER BEACH PARTY lundi 9 mai 15 danseurs nus sur 2 pistes de danses HAWAIEN et buffet gratuit de 19h à 21h

ENTRÉE GRATUITE

And that bathroom on the third floor was

likely a remnant of the many Venus

December, 1922, incorporating Faul Gouin.

Edouard Tellier, barristers, and Alphonse

manufacturing, importing, exporting and dealing













enterprises that occupied the building since the 1920s.

ALTONES

Le Château du Sexe fermé pour de bon

Downtown

Movie crowd sees bust at Château du Sexe

People lined up to catch a movie at the Loews theatre were treated to drama of a different kind last night as police morality squad agents busted the consular downtown strip but next door.

popular downtown strip bur next door.
Thiere were about 30 strippers and
customers inside Château du Sexewhen officers descended on the Ste.
Catherine St. W. club around 6 p.m.,
Montreal Urban Community police
Constable Pierre Houbertsaid.

But police arrested only 14 people 1
they suspect of being involved in illegal "\$10" dances.

"The customers who were inside just en watching the dancers and having a deper aren't being arrested and have nothing to worry about," Houbart day early

Four strippers who police suspect of performing the dances, which involve patrons touching the dancers, were arrested and will be charged with keeping a common broady house. Three customers receiving the

Three customers receiving the dances, two other strippers in the club, and five club employees will be charged with occupying a common

"We want to make it clear that this type of activity is absolutely unacceptable in our territory and that there are consequence for offering it," Houbart

PUT SIGN ON DOOR

Police stuck a sign on the door of the closed club last night saying, "Maison

Honbart slid riothing is stopping the club from reopening today - except possibly for lack of drinks to sell, as morality squad officers seized aif the clubs alcohol:

The unfolding police operation draw knudreds for curious allookers outside ing:

the club, bringing traffic on Ste. Catherine St. W. ou standstill.

The throng jeered as one by one, the club's patrons – most of them sheepish-looking men in dapper three-piece suits – were led in handcuffs to police

vans.

The strippers – fully dressed, much to the chagrin of several onlookers – received a more mixed reaction from the crowd, a combination of cheers,



The thing is, 972 was always there, it just wasn't numbered from the 1920s to 1980.

One could argue that it required its own number as soon as erotic entertainment was offered. People who study the history of numerical addresses will tell you that they originated as a means of surveillance. And women who do sex work will tell you they are surveilled.

(suite à une vente) ouest, Montréal

Here is an incomplete list of clubs that have been at 972 Sainte-Catherine ouest since the number returned:

Spring to Fall, 1980: Seduction 🗚 🔾

Winter, 1980-January 1981: Harmonie Piano Bar Spring 1983 to Summer 1985: Bar Sélect pour Hommes Chez Marc Paul

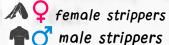
In October of 1984 there was a punk club called KRASH.

Chez Doris 1986

Chateau du Sexe 1987-2008

Temptation 2009-2010 🗚 🗣





OPINIONS

Bibliothèque nationale : la dimension économique n'est pas le seul enjeu

Merci à la BAnQ pour ses archives incroyables, où j'ai trouvé tant de riches témoignages de nos vies comme travailleuses du sexe à Montréal. Ceci comprend cet article d'opinion rédigé par le président et le directeur général de l'Union des écrivaines et écrivains québécois et publié dans la Presse en 1996, exprimant leur inquiétude collective face à l'incongruité du fait que le nouvel emplacement du BNQ puisse être situé en face du Château du Sexe. John Bull Pub, 1201 de Maisonneuve Blvd. Tonight: Central. 844-8355.

Bar Km/h, 4171 St. Denis St. Fri.: Bi-Clan with Maxime Dubois. 843-4604.

By Alex Tigchelaar 2023

Le Club Maison Iberville, 5488 Iberville St. Sun.: Bluegrass music with the Mountain City Ramblers, from 3 to 9 p.m. 524-8696.

Maples Inn, 1 Claire. Tonight:

Thank you Archives gaies du Québec for your amazing collection of matchbooks and Sortie magazines. Thank you Théo Bignon for inviting me to do this project with you.

