

Picturesque Garneau faces massive hatchet-job

By TERRY DONNELLY

On the corner of 90th Avenue and Saskatchewan Drive there is a small plaque which reads: "This part of the city (Garneau) was named after Laurent (Larry) Garneau, farmer, community organizer, and musician, who acquired the property in 1874. His original home was on the lane at the rear of 11108-90 Ave. A maple tree planted by him still grows there."

The address cited on the plaque is a fraternity house, a large, attractive structure surrounded by

trees. The original Garneau maple is among them, but it is certain that it will not be for much longer.

For the fraternity house, and all the houses along 90th Avenue, and all the houses in North Garneau, are scheduled for destruction. Even now bulldozers and scrapers are busy levelling the block north of the Tuck Shop, turning what was once a quiet residential street into a temporary parking lot.

EXPANSION NEEDED

The reason for all this? Cold, unfeeling necessity. The university is growing. Sometime in the dim

past an idiotic planning board let the lands which are now Windsor Park slip from the grasp of the university. Then, a few years ago, when it became apparent that the present acreage of the campus was simply not enough, a decision was made to expand eastward, into the Garneau district.

And so the destruction began, and will continue until everything north of 87th Ave. and west of 110th St. is levelled and replaced with ugly, squalid Department of Public Works buildings.

Edmonton is, by and large, a city of two kinds of houses. The older districts, like Garneau, are full of magnificent old brick and wooden structures, relics of another age when a man's home was more than a place to sleep in. Each house bears the stamp of its builder—if not architecturally correct, at least architecturally unique.

POST-WAR ECHH

Then there are the post-war houses, familiar to anyone who has ventured into the districts skirting the core of the city—blocks and blocks of drab, grey stucco houses, seldom even marked by a dab of bright paint. If these houses, too, bear the stamp of their builders, it is a sad comment on the anonymity of the middle class.

To anyone who takes the time to wander through the streets of Garneau, it must immediately become apparent that this, at one time, was one of the grander sections of the city. Even now, when many of the houses are in a state of decay, one cannot help but be impressed by the dignity and good taste of the finer homes.

Some might call North Garneau a slum. Some of the houses are poorly kept, some even on the verge of collapsing. Decades of greedy and irresponsible landlords are responsible for much of this; the rest can be attributed to the inevitable process of aging.

CHARACTER EXUDED

But the houses, delapidated as they may be, all exude the ineffable something which we must call character. It has been distilled into them by the many people who have lived and are living in them. Some have even acquired names: Sweaty Betty's, Morbid Manor, the Farm.

To the students who live in Garneau, it is more than a district, more than a collection of quaint old houses—it is a community. A Gateway columnist once proved

that the population density of the area was greater than that of Hong Kong—within an area of a few square blocks hundreds of people, mostly students, are crammed into every available room.

Some are in fraternity houses, some in co-ops, some in the garrets of residential homes. But all of them, no matter how they live, are a part of the Garneau sub-culture, a community of students which forms an integral part of the spirit of the university.

THEY BELONG

They experience something which those who commute from distant suburbs of the city can never experience: an affinity with the campus, a feeling that one is a part of the university community rather than just a daytime visitor.

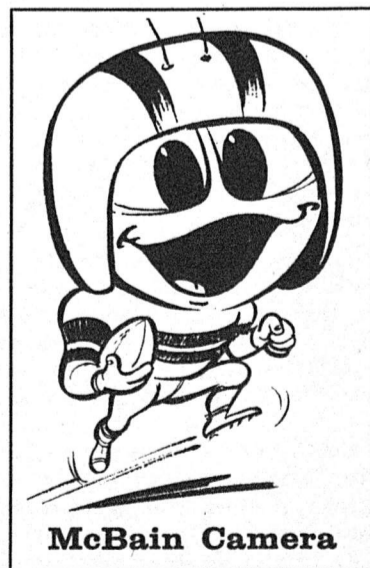
When North Garneau is gone, will this spirit pass away? Perhaps a new university community will grow up in one of the stucco jungles south or west of the campus, or perhaps the city will absorb the concentration of students.

And over the lands which once pulsed with life will rise the towers of the Jejuniversity of Alberta.



THE FAMOUS GARNEAU MAPLE
... that maybe is an oak

—Lyll photos



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