

Leonard Cohen's boyhood Belmont home on the market

BY ERIN STROPES

When Montrealers watched k.d. lang sing Leonard Cohen's "Hallelujah" during the opening ceremonies of the 2010 Winter Olympics, some may have thought "this song was probably written right here in Montreal." When Westmounter Marcel Guay saw the performance in the upstairs den of his home at 599 Belmont, he turned to his wife Mary and said "This song could have been written right in this room."



The upstairs den was filled with Cohen's papers and belongings, including a guitar and original sheet music for "Suzanne" and "Hallelujah," when family friend John Baker moved into the house in 1997. Guay says Baker offered to return the materials, but Cohen told him just to toss them. Baker kept them. Through the door is the sun room where Cohen wrote some of his earliest poems.

There is certainly a lot of history in the two-story, semi-detached upper Westmount home where Cohen, an internationally renowned singer, poet and author, and one of Westmount's most famous

sons, spent the first nineteen years of his life – a house that is currently up for sale.

Cohen immortalized Murray Park

It was here that Cohen lived when he started his first band, the Buckskin Boys, while he was attending McGill University. In his 1963 novel *The Favourite Game*, he describes the house's view of Murray Park from "the sun room, which was no more than an enclosed balcony attached to the back of the house...they looked out of the windows at the park and the tennis players."

Although Cohen moved out in 1953, the house remained in his family until just over a decade ago. Westmount author and literary critic Terry Rigelhof, who lives just a few blocks away, recalls Cohen bringing his young children to visit his sister in the late '80s. Cohen's daughter Lorca was an avid jewelry maker. "You'd see him on many a Saturday afternoon lounging outside the Bead Emporium on Victoria while she shopped for beads."

Guay, a lifelong Westmounter and consultant to the pulp and paper industry who moved into 599 Belmont in 2005, says that while he was always aware of Cohen's work, he has only "become a fan" since moving into the house.

"We get [Cohen's] fan mail occasionally, and I'll often look outside to see people standing on the sidewalk, taking photos of the house." Guay is moving out to purchase a condo with his wife, now that their four children have all moved away.

According to Rigelhof, Esther Cohen, Cohen's sister, took these words to heart, maintaining Cohen's room "as a kind of shrine" until she moved out in 1997.

Joanne Poirier, Westmount's director of Urban Planning, says that the house, built in 1925 and extensively renovated since Cohen's time, isn't eligible for any specific



From left: Owner Marcel Guay and real estate agent Brian McGuigan in front of 599 Belmont, where Leonard Cohen spent his childhood and teenage years.

attention as a heritage building. It is a Category II heritage home, which means it is an interesting but not exceptional structure.

An open house on April 24 drew 30 groups – an unusually high number, according to Brian McGuigan, real estate agent with McGuigan Pepin Inc. Although some of the visitors were certainly Cohen fans, McGuigan says the majority were the young families he would expect to see looking at the four-bedroom property.

One thing is certain – whoever moves into the \$1.5-million home will be acquiring a piece of Westmount history.

Westmount Home Needed

Former Westmounters having lived away would like to return to Westmount. Looking in the \$3.5M to \$5M range. Quiet street preferred. Please call me in confidence. Discretion assured.

À votre écoute, depuis plus 25 ans

Sylvie Lafrenière

Chartered Real Estate Agent

514.895.7001

RE/MAX Westmount Inc



More Bought & Sold

.....
continued from p. 24

Address	Price	Evaluation	Buyer	Seller	Date
50% of 41 & 43 York St.	\$442,000	100%=\$466,300	Jonathan Frankel	Kaleem Siddiqi	23-Oct
100 Abbott Ave.	\$440,800	\$331,700	Bayrammuhammet Ushmekov	6631681 Canada Inc.	24-Feb
3123-3127 St. Antoine St.	\$425,000	\$380,000	9214-5713 Quebec Inc. & Ronald Jetté	Charles Baumgarten	19-Mar
50 Bruce Ave.	\$421,000	\$450,400	Jacqueline Iny	L. Philip Phillips	02-Nov
31.5% of 15, 15A & 17 York St.	\$410,000	100%=\$625,100	Fernando Reyes & Cynthia Dubois	Christine Anderson	22-Oct
10 York St. #201	\$382,000	\$328,900	Maya & Brian Kenny	Sergey Dulin	1-Dec
41-43 Bruce Ave.	\$378,000	\$527,400	Marika Hillebrandt-Broere	Nadia Zouaoui	25-Feb
4855 de Maisonneuve Blvd. #402	\$350,000	\$312,400	Milagros Amoros	Arthur McFarland	20-Nov
3171 St. Antoine St.	\$300,000	\$235,600	Eric Lamoureux & Annie Vincelette	Daniel Sandler	16-Dec
50% of 12 Burton Ave.	\$281,500	\$226,250	Jonah Prevost Kirkwood	Cristina, Ann & Madeleine Ross	29-Jan
50% of 12 Burton Ave.	\$281,500	\$226,250	Laura Vogelesang	Cristina, Ann & Madeleine Ross	29-Jan
109 Lewis Ave.	\$262,500	\$325,800	Sandra Perreault	Dominique Delage	23-Feb
399 Clarke Ave. #1C	\$250,000	\$266,100	Antonio Colalillo & Vittoria Condemi	Alexandra Gardner	05-Oct
1 Wood Ave., A70	\$19,000	\$10,000	Christoforos Tambakis	Jackson De Bordes	29-Mar