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WHERE HOLLYWOOD NORTH WAS BORN

The home and office of famed director Norman Jewison goes up for sale **■ HG**



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Former home, office of director Norman Jewison for sale

Building in downtown Toronto was a centre of a new idea: bringing Hollywood north

SHANE DINGMAN
REAL ESTATE REPORTER

18 Gloucester Lane
TORONTO

Asking price: \$8,495,000
Lot size: 35 by 60 feet
Taxes: \$43,305 (2024)
Listing agent: Don Mulholland,
Bosley Real Estate Ltd.

THE BACK STORY

Just off Yonge Street in downtown Toronto is a heritage property that offers the unique opportunity to live above a crucial site in Canadian film history.

The 5½-storey, 11,000-square-foot building at 18 Gloucester Lane has been the property of Hollywood filmmaker Norman Jewison and his family since 1978. In addition to serving as his pied-à-terre apartment in the city, it was the headquarters of his film businesses, which played a mentorship role for many Canadian film figures.

"A lot of people consider it our father's place, but it's the family's place," said Michael Jewison, who co-owns the building with his siblings. The building is also the headquarters for the family foundation, but in the 1980s it was a centre of a new idea: bringing Hollywood north.

"Norman started making films in Canada in the mid-eighties [the first was *Agnes of God*] and this was the early days of Canadian production, when Hollywood was not coming up to Canada yet," Michael said.

He recalls prolific and influential film editor Lou Lombardo (editor of 1969's *The Wild Bunch*) making his famous pasta while in town editing his father's 1987 hit *Moonstruck* on the first floor of the building. Stephen Rivkin, who has since been the editor on megablockbuster franchises *Pirates of the Caribbean* and *Avatar*, was often in the building working on Norman's films.

In 1986, Norman founded what would become the Canadian Film Centre, bringing in Peter O'Brian (whose films have won 19 Genie awards) to run it out of Gloucester in its early years. The family also gave sweetheart office space deals on the third and fourth floors to Canadian filmmakers, people who in the 1990s and 2000s would become some of the who's who of Canadian film.

"Bruce McDonald was in there for a long time ... *Dance Me Outside* [1994] was made out of that office," Michael said of the seminal film filled with future Indigenous stars.

There were also offices for Clement Virgo (who would go on to adapt and direct *The Book of Negroes* for the screen) and Damon D'Oliveira, an actor and producer who would become business partners with Mr. Virgo at Conquering Lion Pictures.

The last movie made out of the



The 5½-storey, 11,000-square-foot building at 18 Gloucester Lane also served as the headquarters of Hollywood director Norman Jewison's film businesses, which played a mentorship role for many Canadian film figures. PHOTOS BY AARON MASON/METROVIEWS.CA

building was 2003's *The Statement*, after which Norman retired from filmmaking.

"Basically, as my father slowed down, we ended up leasing out to other people, usually to entertainment types: casting directors, entertainment lawyers for a while," Michael said.

Norman Jewison died in Malibu on Jan. 20 at the age of 97. Michael plays a role in a story recounted in *The Globe and Mail's* obituary, where as an eight-year-old he was in a skiing accident in Sun Valley, Idaho. His father met U.S. senator Robert F. Kennedy (whose son was also injured skiing) in a hospital waiting room. The story goes that as Norman discussed his recent film *In the Heat of the Night*, Mr. Kennedy is said to have expressed the importance of the depiction of race relations in the South. It was "the first time anybody said what I was doing was going to be important," the filmmaker would say.

THE BUILDING TODAY

The entrance to the building is off the linear parkette (named after Norman in 2001) and a parking lot that runs along Gloucester Lane.

The structure was built in 1911 as a factory, warehouse and repair shop for prominent Toronto cabinetmaker and furniture dealer Lionel Rawlinson. The narrow brick building has a heritage designation from the city, and is adorned with soldiered brickwork above the many street-facing windows.

"We moved to Toronto from London where we had offices in Pinewood Studios," Michael said. "[Norman] liked the idea this was an old furniture factory. We never bought something that's just four walls and a door, it has to mean something."

The first four levels were always commercial office spaces,



but starting on the fifth floor there is a live-work space that functioned as both a base for the family and an occasional landing pad.

"There's a little apartment on the top floor. That's where my mum and dad used to spend evenings and weekends," Michael said. Norman, famously, kept a farm in Caledon, Ont., as well, but felt it was important to have an apartment in the city proper. "When we were editing films, he'd spend all week there. It just depended on the time of the year and time of the film and things like that."

Michael's mother, Margaret Ann Dixon, was married to Norman for 51 years until her death in 2004. "The way my mum decorated it, and my father, they made it all feel very homey, the office doesn't feel like an office, but it's got all the things you need," he said.

The elevator is in the northeast corner of the floorplan and opens into a short hallway that opens into the L-shaped main living space.

"You lock the elevator and that's your front door, it opens right into your space, it has that feeling of that New York private residence kind of thing," Michael said.

glazed floor tiles, blue-painted cabinets and an iron chandelier, surrounded by more of that warm yellow exposed brick.

Behind a door in the centre of the main living space are the stairs up to the sixth-floor apartment, this level is about half the size of the rest of the floors and has a large bedroom with walk-out to roof deck, a dressing room and large ensuite bath with sauna. The style of the suite, according to listing agent Don Mulholland, is pure eighties.

HISTORY IN MOTION

If you've ever been in a 100-year-old industrial building in Toronto, you probably have a sense memory of the pops and groans of ancient wooden floors as you walk through the space. None of that happens at Gloucester, which has floors that are unusual in their soundproofing and over-engineering.

"They put sand between the subfloor and those two-by-tens, we found it when we were digging it up, there's four or five inches of it," Michael said.

In 2018 the family did a major renovation of the first floor, preparing it for a potential commercial tenant, and also updated the third and fourth floors. The editing bays are long gone, but there's still potential for new creative uses. There are three commercial tenants, but two have leases that expire in 2024 and the other runs until 2026. The mainly commercial nature of the downtown space contributes to the hefty annual tax bill.

"It would be nice to have an owner-user, someone who would do something similar to what we're doing," Michael said. "With these kind of buildings you're the temporary custodian. I hope we left it better than we got it, and I hope the next person who will take care of it will do the same."

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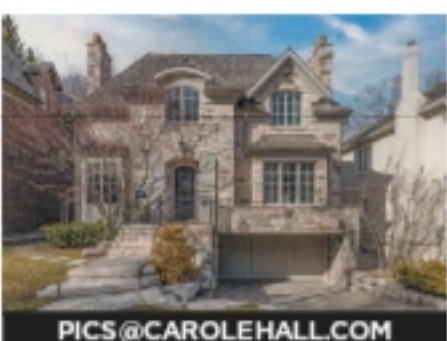
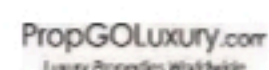
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