



KOKUBAN

Volume 4, Issue 09

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The JCCC is pleased to bring you Kokuban - our monthly e-bulletin that covers topics from heritage treasures to stories about this unique community.

Sedai Features: Sedai Features: John Uchikata and the Early Days of the JC Community in Toronto



Born in Vancouver in 1916, John revisits early memories of moving out east to Hamilton following the war, and the early days of the Toronto Japanese Canadian community – including the founding of the JCCC.

[Click here to listen to the interview](#)

Japanese Canadian Shops & Landmarks

The Prince Hotel Feature by Daria Murphy

Toronto's 1st Jpn. Hotel Due To Open May 1974

Above: The New Canadian, May 4 1973, page1

Join us as we explore Toronto's past and present Japanese Canadian shops and landmarks. In July, we visited the headquarters for The New Canadian Newspaper in downtown Toronto's Queen West. Today, we are heading northward to Don Mills to visit the Prince Hotel. Located at 900 York Mills Road, the Prince Hotel opened in May 1974 and was the first Japanese-owned hotel in

North America. Let us reminisce about the first few decades of the Prince Hotel.



Left: "A crown for a Prince." April 17 1974. Toronto Star, Photographed by Ron Bull. Right: Lemon Creek Reunion Hotel Pool, 1980, Tom Matsui Collection JCCC 2011.47.06.05.20.

Upon its opening, the Prince Hotel was managed by the Seibu Group of Enterprises chain from Japan. This was the first Japanese-owned hotel in not just Toronto but in North America. The building was designed by a pair of Canadian architects, Ronald J. Thom—who had designed Massey College at the University of Toronto in 1963—and Reno C. Negrin. The hotel cost \$20 million to build, which, when converted for inflation, in 2023 would be approximately \$138 million. Although the Hotel has undergone many interior renovations since its 1974 opening, the exterior 22-storey tower and a 5-storey low rise remain standing today. The Hotel originally featured six meeting rooms, three ballrooms, three restaurants, two lounges, and a nightclub.



Left: *The Canadian Jewish News*, February 10, 1983, page 25. Right: "Opulent and Authentic." November 20, 1975. *Toronto Star*, Photographed by Frank Lennon.

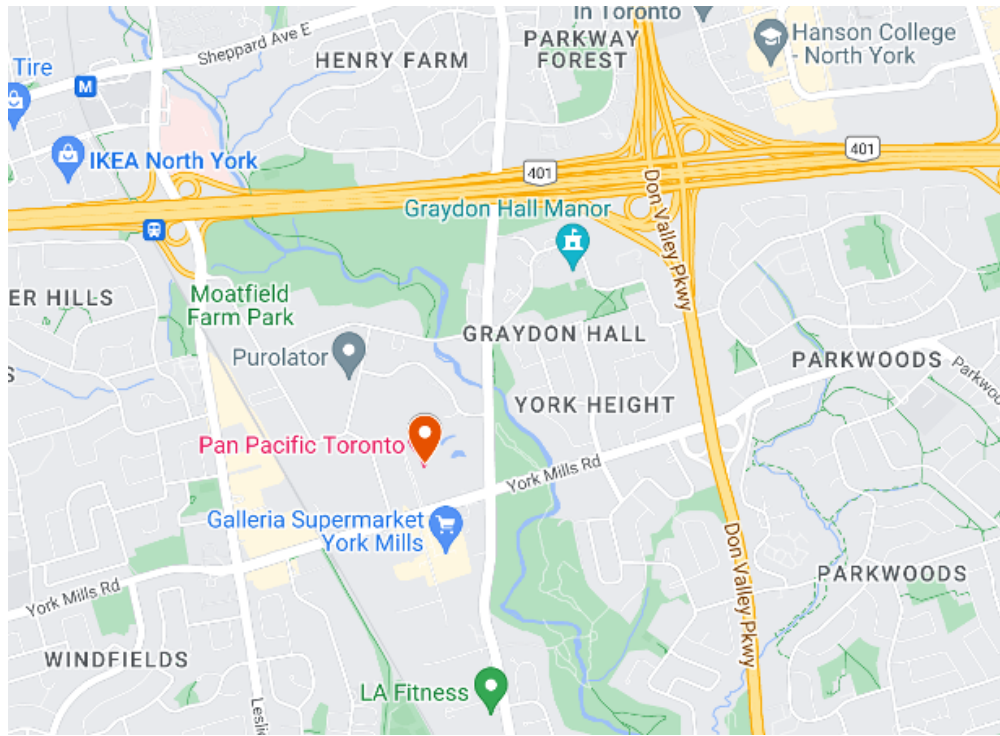
The Katsura Restaurant was the gem of the Hotel, garnering attention from *The New York Times*. In 1977, the NYT published a Toronto travel guide and listed Katsura as a must-visit destination for Japanese food. The author recalls the delicacies served at Katsura's tatami room, teppanyaki room, sushi bar, and tempura section. Beyond the delicious food, the interior of Katsura was a sight to behold. The restaurant was decorated by Japanese artisans, who had flown all the way from Japan to work on the project. The artisans created shoji walls and sliding doors made of rice paper. But the centerpiece of the restaurant was a flowing stream with a water mill. While guests enjoyed the sights, scent, and sounds of the restaurant, food was served by waitresses dressed in kimono.



Left: "Bouncing Niftily on diving board." May 23, 1974. Toronto Star, Photographed by Graham Bezant. Right: "Tradition lives on with Japanese master." March 16, 1975. Toronto Star, Photographed by Dick Loek.

The Prince Hotel garnered a wide variety of guests. Pictured above on the left, Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau is photographed enjoying the outdoor pool just days after the Hotel opening. A year upon the Prince Hotel's opening, Kanpo Harada (pictured above right), a Japanese brush painting master, performed a brush painting demonstration. The Toronto Star article that features the image explains that Kanpo Harada's works are considered priceless, and he is "...one of five of the most revered traditional performing artists in Japan." Other exciting events include 1977 seventy-five Japanese students from the Sodo Kimono Gakuin in Tokyo arrived at the Prince Hotel for the 8th annual Kimono Mission. The students toured cultural sites in Toronto while dressed in kimono, such as the Black Creek Pioneer Village, the Royal Ontario Museum, and City Hall. The group finished the tour at the Prince Hotel by meeting around 200 guests to teach them the history and culture of kimono.

The Prince Hotel changed ownership twice, once in the early 2000s when The Westin Hotels brand purchased the Hotel and second in 2019 when the Pan Pacific Hotels Group purchased the Prince Hotel. Under its new ownership, the Prince Hotel is now the Pan Pacific Toronto. The Pan Pacific features a Seasons Restaurant and 900 Lounge, a change in pace from the Prince Hotel's multi-restaurant past. The Hotel still stands at 900 York Mills Road and is open for hotel booking and restaurant reservations. If you are ever in the area, keep in mind the rich history and exciting memories that were shared at the Prince Hotel.



Google Map, 2023

The map above marks the location of The Prince Hotel with a red pin. Click on the image for directions. For a map of all Japanese Canadian Shops & Landmarks featured in this series, please click the map above.

https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/viewer?mid=1_qxalkG38BnWZrrmSwYPxfHdfOKMF0E&ll=43.695878037145356%2C-79.40984635&z=12

Ohana Hula
Thanksgiving Ho'ike (show) and Luau
Celebrating 45 Years of Hula in Toronto
Saturday, October 7, 2023

Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre
6 Garamond Court, Toronto, Ontario
Ho'ike (Show) 5:00 pm (doors open 4:30 pm)
Be sure not to miss the aftershow Luau, complete with Roast Pig!

Price: \$50

For tickets Contact:
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OHANA HULA

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The JCCC is proud to host Ohana Hula's Thanksgiving Ho'ike (show) and Luau celebrating 45 years of hula in Toronto.



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