

# Autumn at Arva mill imbues thankfulness

1990

The picturesque Medway Creek flour mill is packed with nostalgia.

Autumn is a nostalgic time of year. Everything about the season seems to remind people of their childhood — of a time when the world seemed friendlier and simpler. Of course, the world wasn't any friendlier or simpler 20 or 40 years ago, but we were children then, happy in our ignorance, and something about autumn makes us long for that innocence.

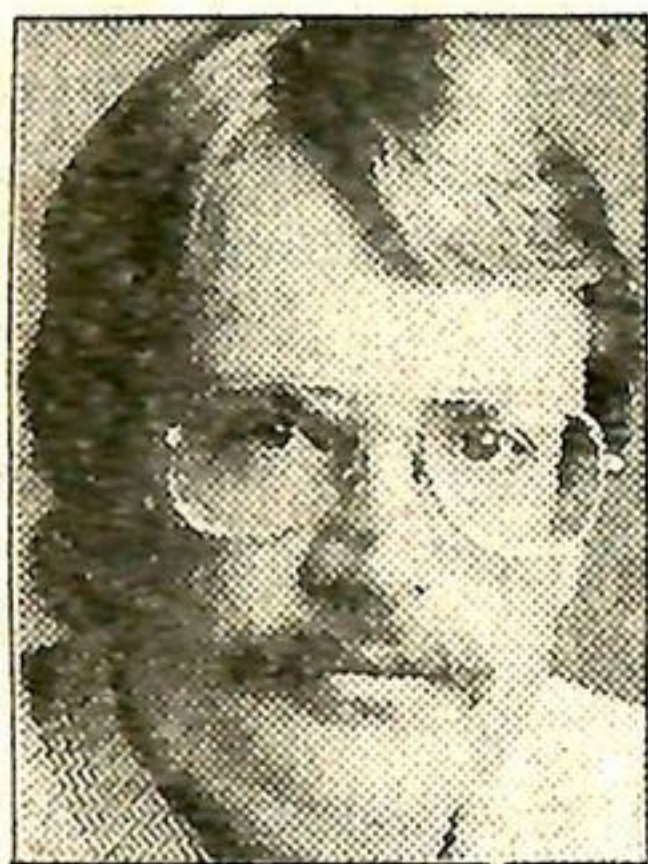
Autumn is colorful leaves and country fairs and steaming horses and apple or pumpkin pies and homemade bread and cider — or so we want it to be. Even if we were born and raised in the heart of the city, we like to dip into the collective consciousness for our share of memories of country hay rides and the smell of burning leaves and the sound of wood crackling in the fireplace.

Perhaps our seasonal nostalgia is linked to the ageless cycle of planting and harvest — and thanksgiving. In an age which has all but lost touch with the seasonal rhythms, the ripe fields and fresh produce make the time of harvest

impossible to ignore — we are surrounded by the visible fruits of our labors.

Few things combine the nostalgia of the season with the importance of harvest and Thanksgiving for me like a visit to the Arva flour mill, just north of London on Highway 4. With its solid rough-hewn maple beams, whirring, noisy confusion of drive belts, and smell of burlap bags and freshly milled flour, the Arva mill stands for everything good about the way things were and ought still to be — close ties to the earth, honest, rewarding work, tangible rewards.

Constructed in 1842 on the south bank of the Medway Creek, the mill is a living history, a memorial — a working memorial, which is the best kind — to a way of life and a set of values which are rapidly disappearing.



## ONE MAN TALKING

Otte Rosenkrantz

Last time I was there, I was given a look around by one of the millers. As we walked over the worn rock-elm and maple floors, the machinery suddenly started, setting up an unearthly din and sending flour dust sifting down from the rafters. "That's the turbine!" he yells at me. "We are milling feed this morning. We use the water turbine for that."

Turns out the mill still uses a water-powered turbine for about 50 per cent of its milling "because it's free!"

There are faded, dusty, remnants of posters and announcements on the walls of the mill which hold a history of their own. I can, for instance, just make out the headline "List of Titanic Survivors" on one wall, and on another is a chart from 1902 indicating the flow through the building of the flour being milled.

The miller talks to me as we walk. He talks to me of how he used to swim in the mill stream when he was a boy, and of how there used to be brown trout in the river. He remembers paddling his canoe to the woods upstream, and how beautiful the oaks and maples were.

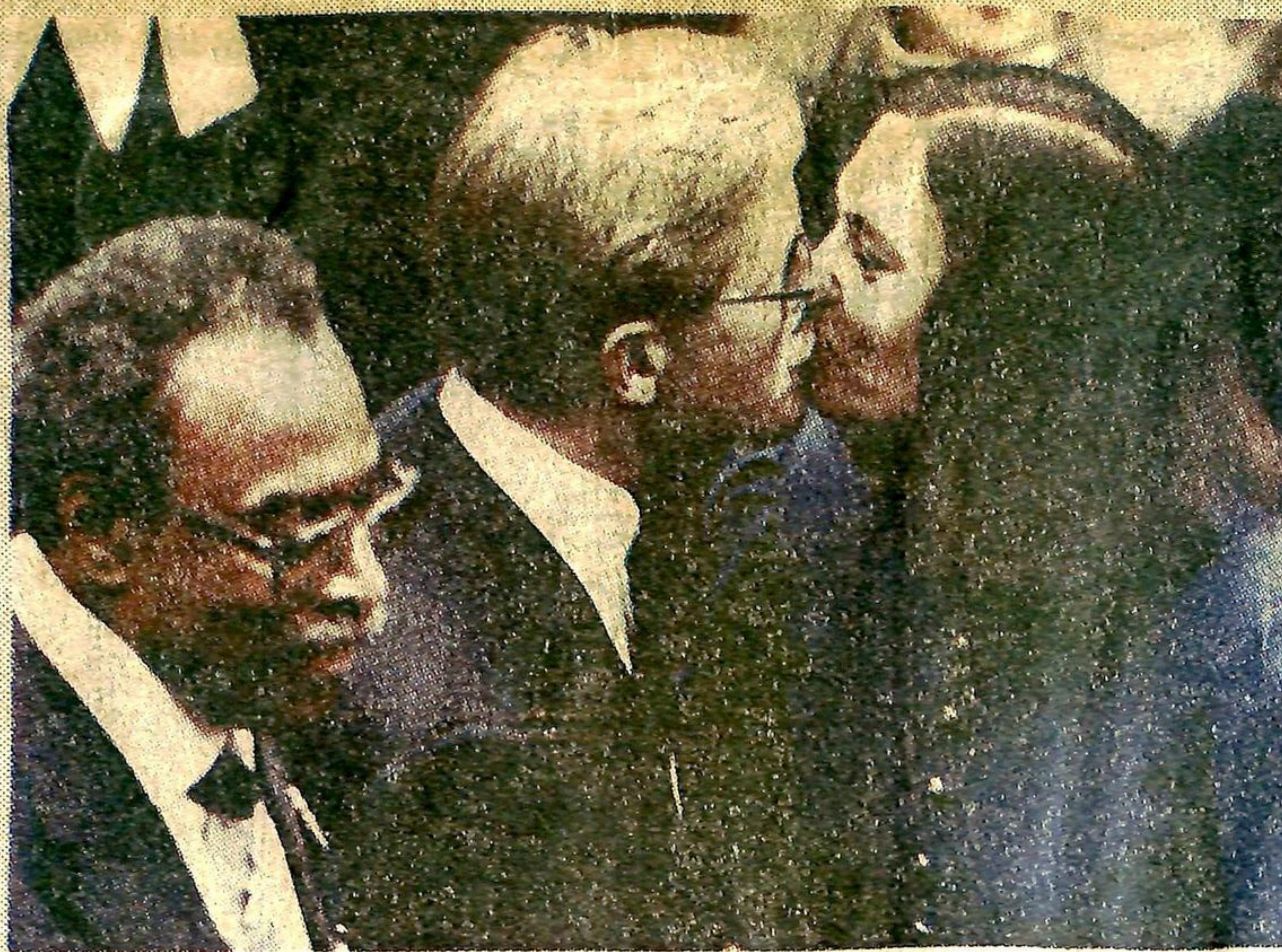
The woods and the brown trout are gone, replaced by new subdivisions and "monster" homes and septic tanks. Now that the woods are gone and the city plans to annex that part of the county, he worries what will happen to the mill, and to the quality of the water in the river. He points into the murky depths of the mill-stream.

"There is a rowboat down there somewhere that sank years ago. You used to be able to see it, the water was so clear. But not any more."

Not any more. So much is "not any more."

So go to the Arva flour mill and see it while it is still there. Indulge in a little good old-fashioned autumn nostalgia — they sure don't make it like they used to. Then go home and bake a loaf of bread.

And be thankful.



Canadian Press

Premier Bob Rae receives a kiss from his wife Arlene Perly Rae moments before the NDP government's first throne speech — a cautious, new agenda for the province — was presented by Lieutenant-Governor Lincoln Alexander, left.

N.D.P. Gov't in Ont. - Sept 6/90  
Speech from **INSIDE** the throne - Nov/90

Sept. 6 - the first N.D.P. government in Ont  
Below 1931



The Birr Women's Institute were serving hot meals for 50¢ at the 1931 ploughing match at the C.R. Carmichael farm

Since 1842