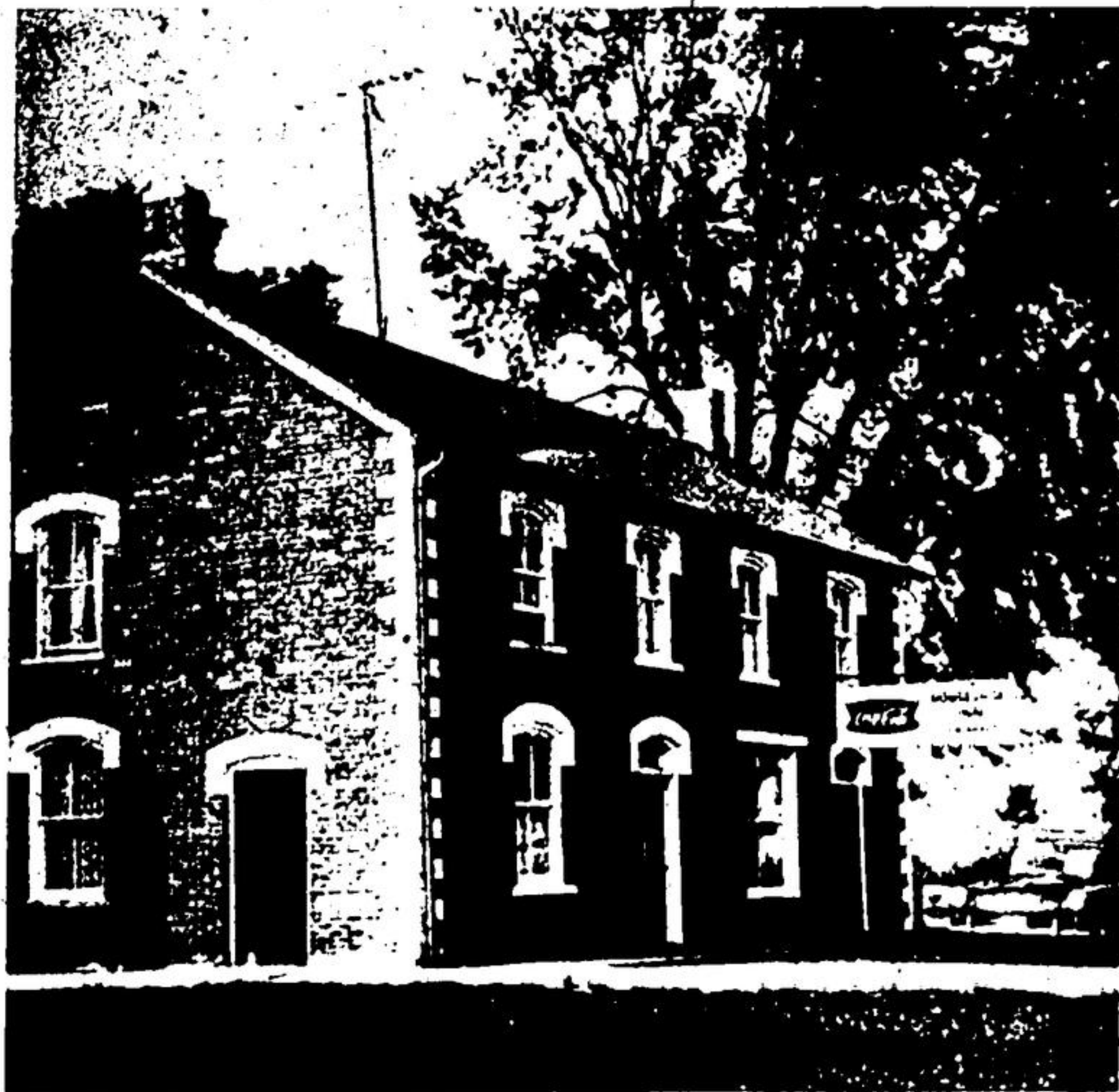


The Acton Free Press

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Second Section



HORSESHOE INN at Cataract is still a stopping off place for travellers. The inn is the sole remaining hostel of three which Cataract kept busy when the community was enjoying prosperity.—(Staff Photo)



VISITORS TO CATARACT need only ask one of the village residents for directions to the scenic spots. Wendy Barnsdale and her kitten are typical.—(Staff Photo)

Nearby places to see

Hub of Bruce Trail, scenic falls site Cataract once "gold rush" country

Scene of a genuine gold rush in the last century, one of the first places in the province to generate electricity, and a picturesque spot for hikes and picnics, Cataract is another of the small places in this district which is gradually being recognized as home grown tourist attractions.

Cataract became well known this year after two fatal accidents and another near-fatal when swimmers fell over the falls at the site of the old generating plant. But this is poor publicity for a village which has known serenity for most of its existence.

The spectacular view which the village of Cataract provides for sightseers has made the tiny hamlet mildly famous but founder Richard Church had other ideas for the community when he first settled there.

About 15 miles north of Acton as the crow flies, Cataract was first known as Church's Falls after its founder. When the Credit Valley Railroad built a line through the valley they renamed the village Cataract after its most distinguishing geographical feature — the falls on the Credit.

Real estate information of 100 years ago predicted that the village would become "a large mercantile and manufacturing centre." Certainly the extensive water power available, the railway and large quantities of lime and freestone made this prediction seem valid at the time. Even more so when a railway spur line connected to Elora went through a few years later.

But although there were some busy years and the community flourished, it never did grow to the expectations of Mr. Church. He advertised choice land in the village and had a map drawn up with many streets all ready for houses to be built but the expected rush never came.

There are new houses being built in the village now but they are located for reasons which the real estate men of a century ago listed as "This village is beautifully situated on the picturesque banks of the Credit River, commanding a charming view of the Caledon Falls. It can scarcely be surpassed for beauty of scenery, purity of water or salubrity of air." It must ultimately become the market for one of the best agricultural districts of Canada.

Conn Smythe, the hockey tycoon, must have read the old advertising blurbs about agriculture because he bought up much of the land eastwards from

from the village downstream to the Forks, was reputed to be one of the most scenic in the province.

Earlier in its history, Cataract was the scene of a real "gold rush". Between 1873 and 1874 a rumor spread along the settlements clustered around Lake Ontario that gold had been found in the Caledon Hills. Hundreds came but no gold was ever found.

The story still circulates around the old families in the hills that many of the prospectors perished one cold winter and that their ghosts still linger in the abandoned shafts and caves in the limestone cliffs.

Cataract once had a church and a school but both have been closed for many years. Residents go to school and church elsewhere. The ruins of the little Catholic church still stand in a maple grove on a quiet street.

Today, visitors to Cataract wander down to the river and follow the banks down to the falls, past the ever-flowing spring which empties into a wooden trough and which the railway company agreed never to disturb, but few think of the hopes and dreams which the picturesque village had for people not too long ago.

The Deagles family saw the possibilities of the falls at Cataract for generating electrical power around the turn of the century after they had bought the flour mill. The plant was built with crude equipment at first and by 1900 John Deagle had succeeded in generating electricity. He lit the flour mill, the Deagle's house and also mounted a bulb in the village from the new fangled contraption.

Soon the Deagle's plant was supplying power to Alton, Orangeville, Inglewood, Caledon, Belfountain and Erin as well as to Cataract and to many farms in the area.

John Deagle sold out to Overland and Harris who in turn sold out to Ontario Hydro. The Hydro dismantled the plant, blew up the dam and let out the six acre body of fresh water that once supplied trout dinners for the people of the village.

Other noted landmarks to disappear from the valley discouraged residents and growth, including the old Dominion road and the Gould Quarry, which employed 20 men at its peak. The road, which hugged the bank of the Credit

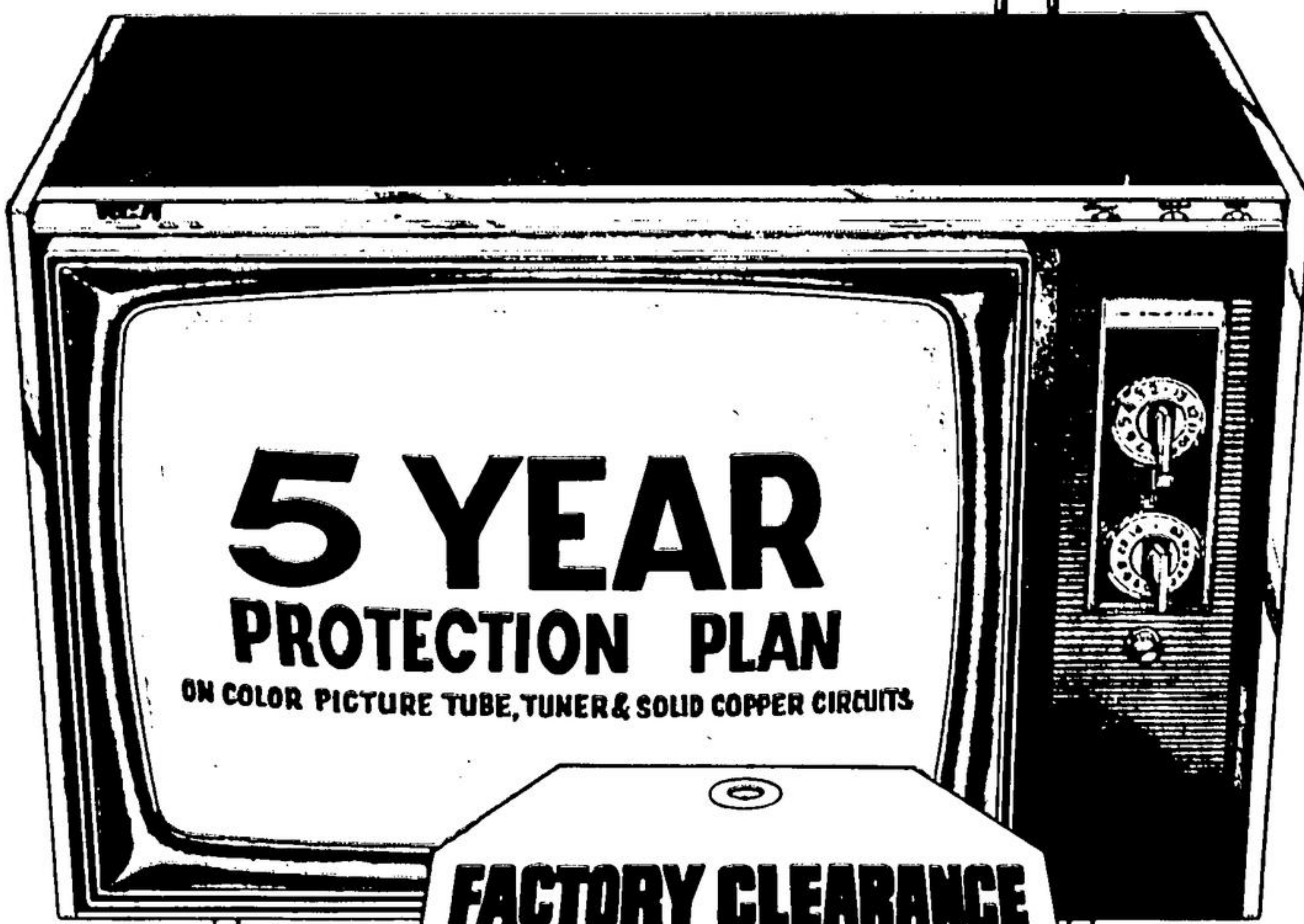
Dump resident ordered to leave

Esquaring dump's location on the fourth line, has been the target for brickbats from nearby neighbors over the past few years, but one 65 year-old man called the place home for several weeks.

The grey-haired man who had constructed a shack on the dump appeared in court last week charged with trespassing and having no visible means of support. He told the judge he had no job and nowhere else to go.

Ordered to move into the county jail, it was later found the grizzled dump resident was eligible for the old age pension and he was allowed to go to a Salvation Army home.

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MANY CATARACT residents have this scene out their back door extending as far as the misty hills at Forks of the Credit.—(Staff Photo)