

His hobby comes in handy

Milton man paints IPM signs

One of the busiest men at the International Plowing Match in Halton next week will be George Swann of Milton, official sign painter for Ontario Plowmen's Association.

Every year for the past 21 years George has spent two weeks at the IPM doing sign work—the week of the match and the preceding week. That's his annual fall holiday.

"It's really just a hobby for me, I'm not in it for the money," he says. He works as much as 16 hours a day and his pay is the same as any OPA director or staffer—\$10 a day plus expenses.

By the time this year's IPM is over, George will have turned out over 300 signs. There are street signs, parking signs, toilet signs, and signs to go on the tractors for all the special classes—students, juniors, directors, press, mayors, wardens and queen of the furrow contestants all plow their fields with a tractor bearing one of George's signs.

Saves them all
Each year when the match ends the signs are packed in boxes and shipped to the site of the next year's match, where they will be repainted and re-used. George hates to throw anything out so he has standardized sign wordings and sizes so the boards can be used over and over again with just a little touch-up, or a change of wording.

And if you'd like in on a little secret, he even uses both sides of some of his signs. The front may bear the name of a mayoralty plowing race candidate and the back of the sign might carry the name of a furrow queen contestant.

It was back in 1953 George first went to the International as sign painter. He was working at Milton Milling Co. and local MPP Stan Hall was an OPA director. A world match was being held in Ontario and someone was needed to make up signs for the contestants. Stan knew George did some painting as a hobby so he spoke to his employer and received permission to "borrow" George for the week.

First holiday
"That was the first time I ever got a holiday with pay," grins George. He had to start from scratch that year and make all the signs for the match—he worked all night getting ready for opening day. Those signs were kept in use each year until 1964 when they were lost in a serious fire at Peterborough. That was a busy year for him—he had to make up a new batch.

Signs are important at the plowing match, says the painter. People like to take pictures of plowing contestants and it helps if the contestant has his name and hometown painted on a sign on the side of his tractor. "The whole thing is for publicity," he says.

George's signs are also important to tented city

visitors. "He keeps people from wandering around in a dither," said one newspaper account, reviewing George's work.

Some of his signs were kept by plowing champions and have travelled with them to Europe for world matches. George feels proud to realize that his signs helped identify the Canadians in such contests.

"Payntin' Place"
He always paints freehand, first marking out the letters in pencil and then filling them in with paint. He usually works in a small booth at the rear of the headquarters building. He calls his IPM shop "Payntin' Place".

Born in England, he came to Canada in 1926 at the age of 18 and worked for several years on a farm near Milton. The farmer was a butcher and George's first sign was done for the back of his car. The farmer ran a large feed mill at Milton Flour Mills so in the winter when the farm work slowed down, George would go to work in the feed mill to help pay off the account. Most winters you could find him out on the mill pond cutting ice blocks and hauling them off with a team of horses.

In 1937 he was hired to work at the mill full time. One day

his employer bought a new truck and asked George if he would paint the name on the door. "And ever since I've been busy painting," says the Court St. resident.

Still at work
He remained at the mill (its name changed to Milton Milling Co. during the war years) and stayed on when Supersweet Feeds purchased the company from Dr. C. A. Martin in 1960. In 1971 he transferred to Sherwood Farms, Dundas, another division of Robin Hood Multifoods, where he worked as an agri-products salesman and serviceman.

Last September he officially retired after 36 years with the mill but he still does some part time work for the company. They call George whenever they need him. And he's still busy travelling around Ontario with the Sherwood Farms sound car, a company car outfitted with speakers and a public address system.

He visits Milton Farmers' Market, fall fairs in the district, horse shows, garden parties and all kinds of public events where a sound car and recorded music are needed. The car and PA system are also in big demand for parades. Much of this work is done "gratis".



"MR. SIGN MAN" at the International Plowing Match for the past 21 years has been George Swann of Milton, pictured with the "Payntin' Place" sign he hangs over his workshop. He does all the signs for the match.

IPM publicist

George has told everybody about it

If anyone in Halton doesn't know there's a big plowing match here next week, it's not George Swann's fault.

George, a Milton resident well known for his sign painting work and his travels with the Super-sweet's Sherwood Farms sound car, is publicity chairman for this year's International Plowing Match and has been busy for over four years publicizing the big event.

As a matter of fact if it weren't for George, Halton might not even be hosting the 1974 match. Apparently back in 1969 at the local Halton Plowing Match awards banquet, George was sitting at a table with Halton's OPA director Jack Taylor and

former world plowing champion Bob Timbers of Stouffville.

Just kidding, but...
"Bob was kidding around with us and said Halton should be hosting the IPM one of these days," says George. Jack Taylor agreed it was a good idea. So George wrote a quick note to the chairman, "Why can't we have the IPM in Halton?" and the chairman stood up and said George Swann had just informed him Halton should host the match. From there things snowballed—the Halton Plowmen liked the idea, asked for permission in the spring of 1970 to host the 1974 match, and won OPA's approval. Ever since, George as

publicity chairman has been busy telling people about the Sept. 24-28 event in Halton Hills. He and helpers have attended farm shows in Toronto, London and Ottawa and miscellaneous public events throughout Halton and its surroundings, telling people to come to Halton in '74.

George and his committee bought special Halton IPM flags, caps bearing the Halton insignia, restaurant place mats, book matches, lapel badges, pocket calendars, signs and bumper stickers promoting the show. They arranged a square dancing demonstration at an OPA meeting and had the Milton Senior Citizens Orchestra

renamed "Halton Sodbusters" when they travelled to events plugging the '74 match.

At midnight
"Wherever I go, I publicize it," says George. A couple of weeks ago you might have seen him tacking up a sign near Rockwood... at midnight, by the light of his car headlights. If you visited the recent Steam-Era in Milton, everywhere you turned there was a sign or a poster or a bumper sticker promoting the match, thanks to George.

And at an executive meeting a couple of weeks ago, he went out in the parking lot and counted how many committee workers' cars had bumper stickers. "There are 63 cars in the

parking lot and only 13 of them have plowing match bumper stickers," he told the group. "They're no good to keep as souvenirs—get them on your cars," he scolded.

BEAUTIFUL FARMS
Halton's beautiful farms are even more beautiful this year, thanks to the farmstead and home improvement competition sponsored by the International Plowing Match committee. Over 100 farms entered the competition where prizes were awarded for the most improvement in the property. This contest has been held in the host county every year for the past 22 years, and to date more than 2,000 farms have been beautified in this manner.

FOOD SAMPLES

Remember the "good old days" at the CNE when you could almost make a meal out of the free food samples handed out at the food building? Well the IPM doesn't promise anything quite so elaborate or filling, but some companies will be giving away small samples. One is Supersweet Feeds, a division of Robin Hood Multifoods, which will have samples of meat, pickles, flour, baked goods and frozen foods at its booth.

Buffalo on show

Three buffalo from Halton Region Conservation Authority's famous local herd will be going to see the International Plowing Match in Halton Hills next week. Only they'll see it from inside an exhibit tent.

Steel Company of Canada Limited (Stelco) has made arrangements to borrow a yearling and two buffalo calves from HRC's 80 acre buffalo preserve at Rattlesnake Point Park, to complement the Stelco exhibit at the IPM.

"We expect this to be a novel, interesting and certainly crowd-pleasing display at this year's match," said Stelco exhibit co-ordinator J. R. Lamb. Stelco will be demon-

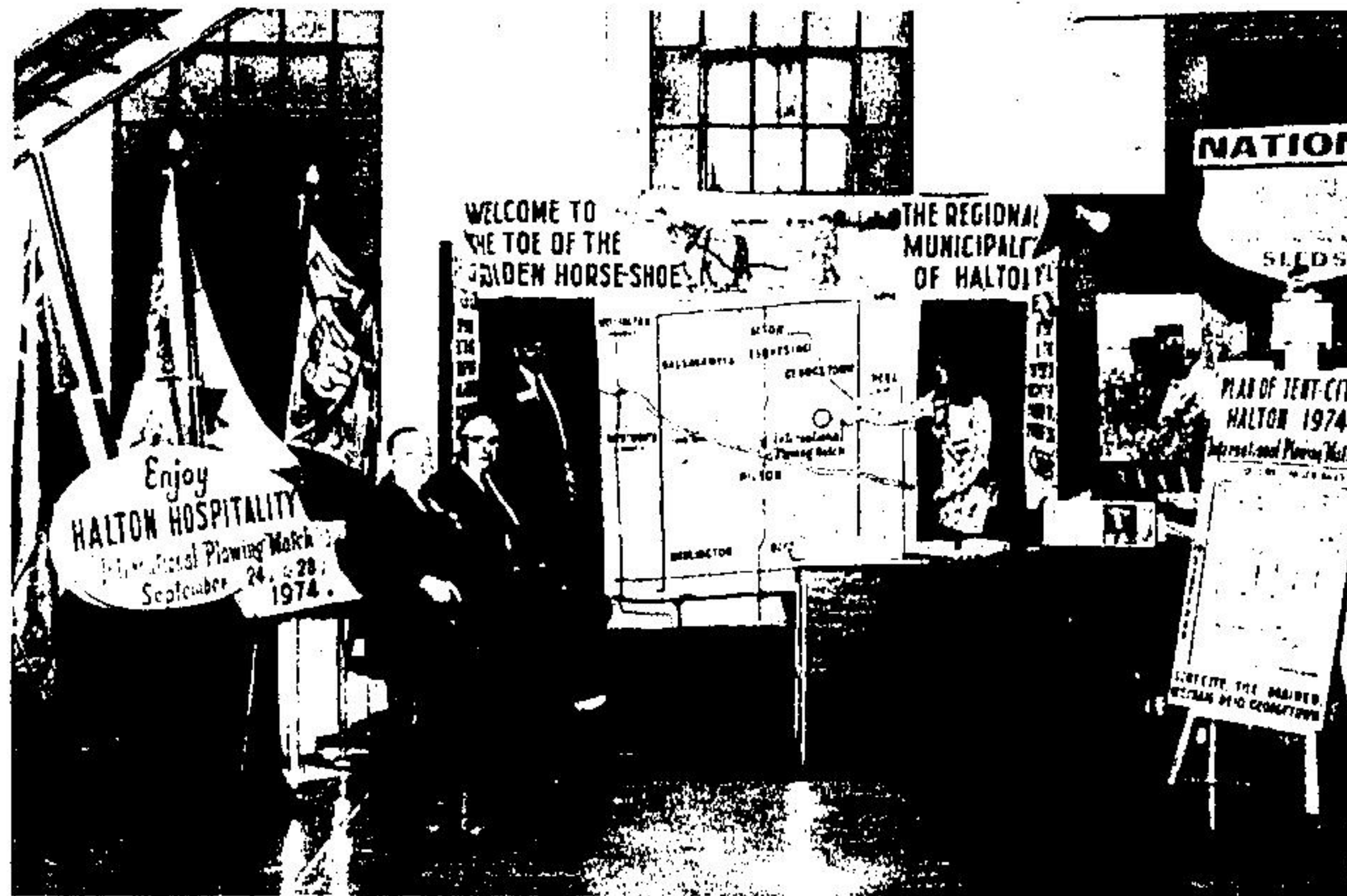
strating how its stockade panels can help the feedlot operator—HRC's buffalo will be inside a steel stockade.

PARADES

Colorful parades are scheduled through tented city at 1 p.m. daily during next week's International Plowing Match.

HORSE POWER

Horses still have a place of honor at every plowing match and their sure-footed power will again be featured at next week's International, although the emphasis is on plowing by tractor power.



THE HALTON COMMITTEE has been busy promoting the 1974 International Plowing Match ever since Halton was awarded the honor of hosting it back in 1970. Here's a booth Halton set up at the ORFREDA show in Toronto last year.

Pictured in the booth are Halton Local Committee chairman Ross Segsworth, sanitation committee chairman George Readhead, publicity chairman George Swann (who did all the signs) and Ontario Furrow Queen Sheila Armstrong.