

# Finding that perfect home—then renovating it

It's an almost universal irony: after months of painstaking effort to find the 'perfect home', the first thing we do upon moving in is tear it apart.

Whatever the reasons - to upgrade the value of the home, add our own personal touches, or simply for the sheer enjoyment, home decorating and renovation has become an all-consuming pastime.

And rooms such as the kitchen and bathroom continue to be the most popular in terms of renovation, according to the Canadian Manufacturer's Association.

Since these rooms are usually the most expensive to upgrade, potential purchasers will often look for completely revamped kitchens and bathrooms, with up-to-date design and modern appliances. Modernizing the kitchen and bathroom in an older home may require more than just a cosmetic change.

Existing bathroom pipes may be in rough shape, while the general layout of fixtures may require redesign. Older kitchens may present the same kind of challenges - lack of storage space, poorly-placed appliances, or dark, gloomy rooms. The existing electrical wiring in the

kitchen may not be adequate to accommodate the refrigerator, dishwasher, garburator and microwave oven, all of which should have dedicated circuits.

In some cases, correcting these deficiencies may mean tearing out everything and starting over.

The bill for a renovated bathroom, including replacing all pipes, can total \$10,000 to \$15,000. The costs of upgrading a kitchen can range from \$15,000 to \$20,000 and the addition of a small breakfast nook will bring the total to between \$30,000 and \$40,000.

In addition to kitchens and bathrooms, family rooms are usually the next safe bet.

Traditionally, the living room comprised the 'formal face,' looking out at the street. Eventually there was an awareness that people would prefer to stare out into their own backyards. This involves 'turning the house around', creating or expanding the family room, adding French doors or perhaps a patio leading to the backyard.

Where space is at a premium, an addition at the back of the house can create new living space, while taking a lot of pressure off the rest

of the rooms. Depending on the dimensions, design and materials, an addition will cost anywhere from \$35,000 to \$70,000 and the price will double for a two-storey structure. Before embarking on any project involving new construction, check the zoning bylaws for your neighborhood.

For home owners considering extensive refurbishing, make sure the renovator is experienced in the particular work you require.

Renovators specialize in certain types and sizes of jobs. If you want your floors tiled, go to a good tile

person. There are also a lot of companies specializing in design/build work offering 'one-stop shopping'. Whatever your preference, look around before spending your money. Talk to people you know, look at projects you like and find out who did the work.

When it comes to remodeling, you either make a few minor, mostly cosmetic changes or you gut the entire room and put it back together. There is nothing in between. If you're committed to change, be ready to endure the temporary inconvenience.

Most importantly, avoid rushing the planning and design stage. On close examination, many first ideas have to be adapted or even discarded.

If properly approached, a renovation project can enhance the appearance, efficiency and overall value of your home. Look at examples of similar projects, seek advice from the experts, hire qualified professionals and lastly, enjoy the results.

This column is presented by Royal LePage Residential Real Estate Services.

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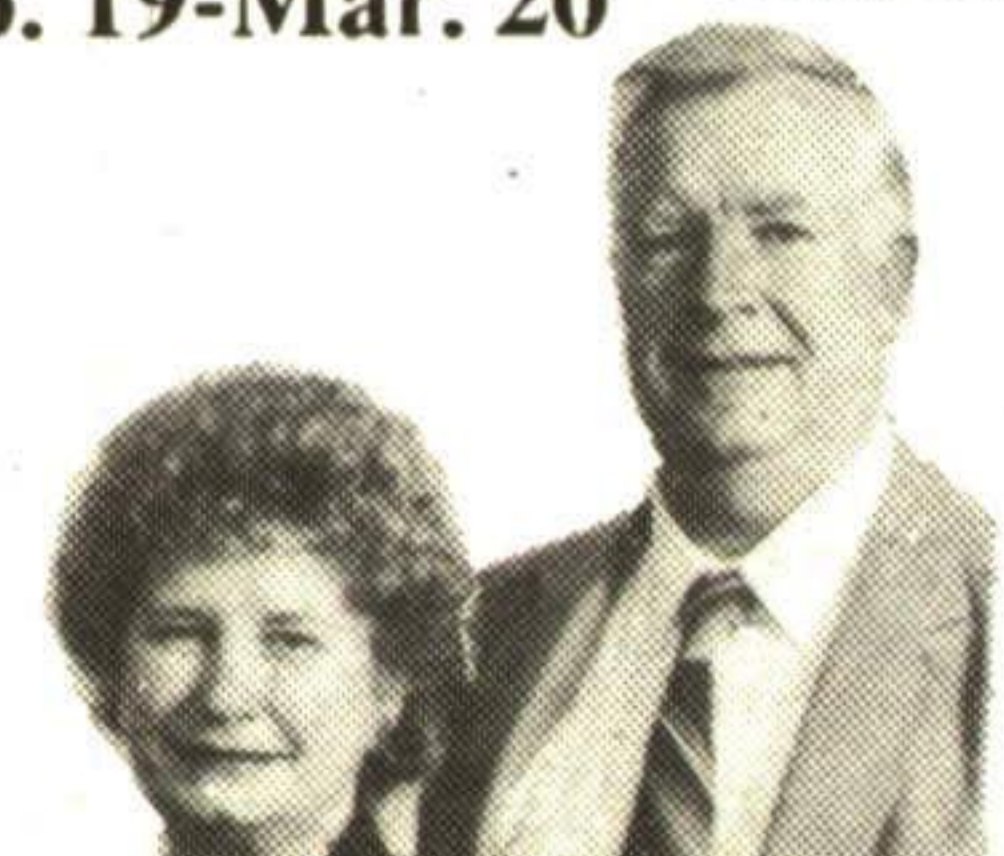
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## Your Week Ahead Horoscope

- ARIES** Mar. 21-Apr. 19  
Go out on a limb. No risk is too great. Your ship is about ready to come in.
- TAURUS** Apr. 20-May 20  
A problem from your past is about to catch up with you. Confession is good for the soul. Good time to clean house.
- GEMINI** May 21-June 20  
Your expertise will not go unnoticed. Finally, you will receive what is rightfully yours. The future looks brighter, already.
- CANCER** June 21-July 22  
Diplomatic maneuvers may not work. A little slight of hand may be necessary. Don't think of it as "underhanded".
- LEO** July 23-Aug. 22  
A negative attitude drags down the workforce. Cutbacks and layoffs may be called for. You must mediate.
- VIRGO** Aug. 23-Sept. 22  
Member of the opposite sex gets under your skin. Before you run him/her off, be sure that is what you want.
- LIBRA** Sept. 23-Oct. 22  
Be open-minded. An off-hand suggestion may be just the push you need to get in the door.
- SCORPIO** Oct. 23-Nov. 21  
Look for versatility. The tried and true have become out-dated.
- SAGITTARIUS** Nov. 22-Dec. 21  
Procrastination will only hold you back. Move forward. Fresh insights will give you more leverage.
- CAPRICORN** Dec. 22-Jan. 19  
New responsibilities are placed on your shoulders. Put your best foot forward and welcome the work. You can do it.
- AQUARIUS** Jan. 20-Feb. 18  
An old wound is reopened. Keep your emotions in check. This is not a good time to bear your soul.
- PISCES** Feb. 19-Mar. 20  
A close friend or relative holds the answer to your problem, though they do not realize it. Listen to them carefully.



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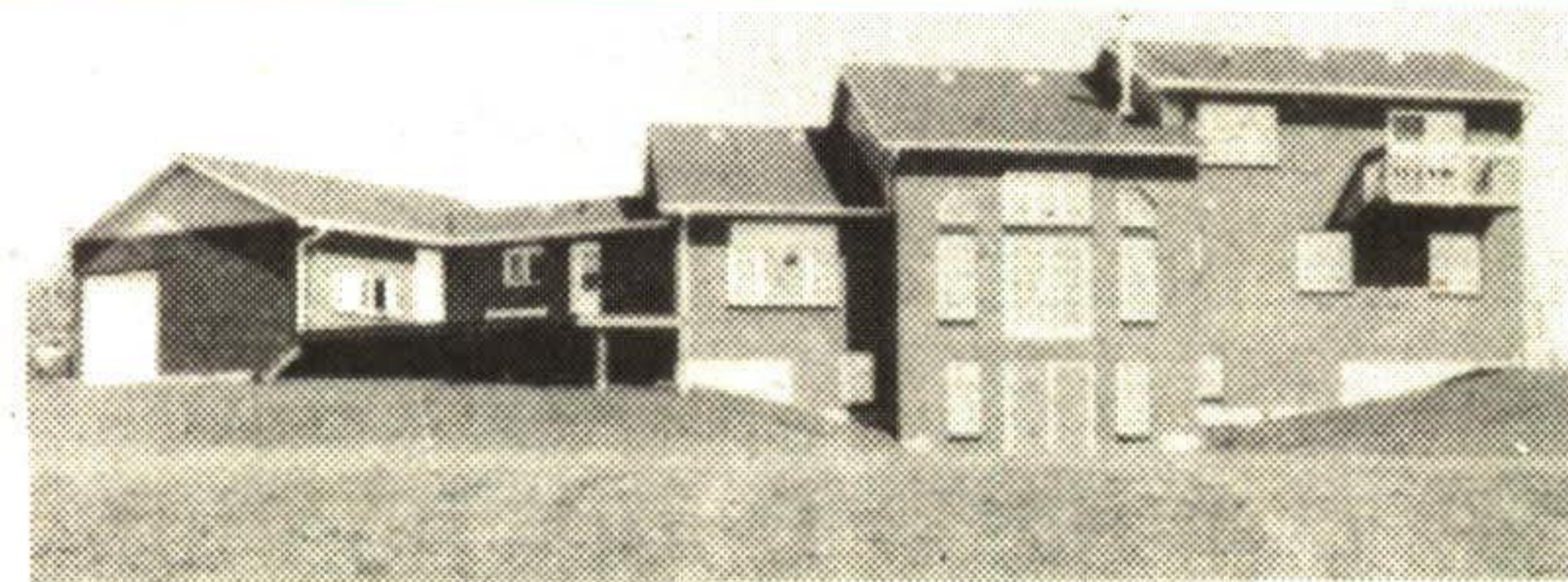
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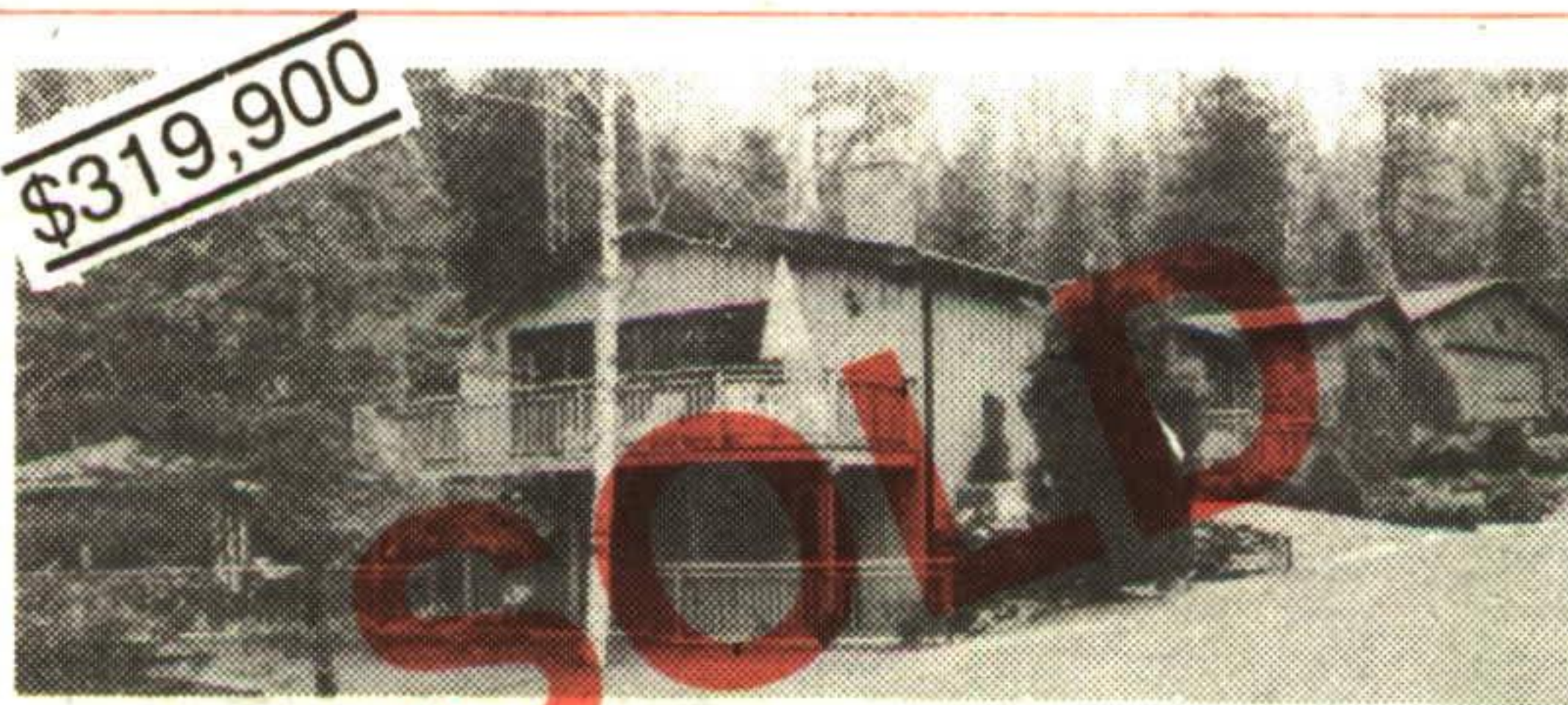
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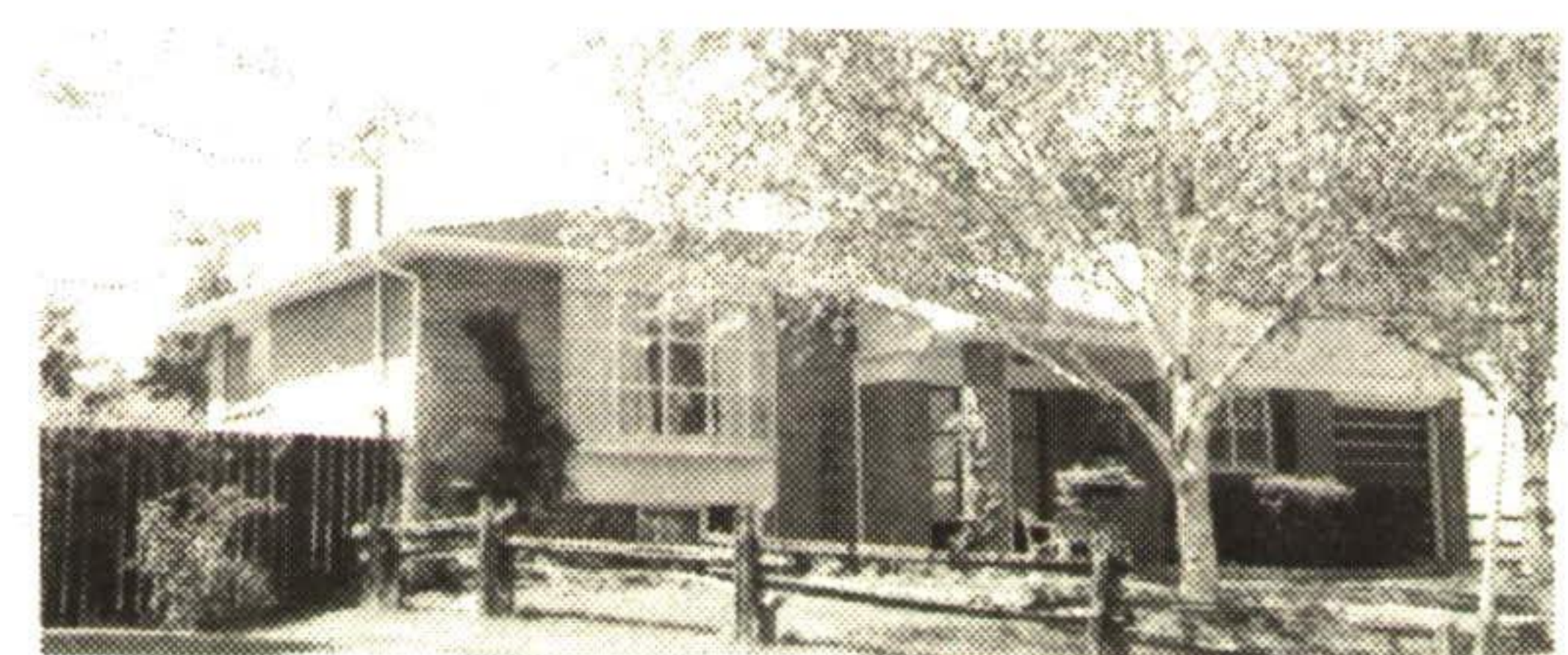
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