

Farmers must be part scientist, part veterinarian

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to survive as a way of life in Halton. "We're going to be swallowed up by that great triangle of Toronto and Hamilton and we will have to fight to survive. To me, it is very important to educate the children at a young age that agriculture is important to everybody." Although the Ministry of Agriculture does have an Agriculture in the Classroom program for Halton students, Lasby says it only scratches the surface.

"Students should be taught what we call from pig to pork. They

should know what it takes to produce a pound of bacon, for example," Lasby said.

"Farming has a bad name in this hi-tech world. I think agriculture needs better representation on the school boards because agriculture is neglected in the classroom. The new curriculum that the Province is working on for the school boards does not include agriculture and I think that's terrible.

We need to get back to basics and people have to understand the vital importance of food producers," Lasby said.

Lasby said people belittle farmers but forget that they could not get along without them.

"It always disturbs me when I see a picture of a farmer done up in a bib overall and a pitchfork. A farmer has to be a real scientist and he or she has to be a vet when necessary. Farmers have to be clever to survive," Lasby said.

In the early 1980s the Ministry of Agriculture and Food developed the Agriculture in the Classroom program following pressure from the Farm Women's Organization to introduce some agricul-

ture topics in the schools.

In the mid-80s the Ministry of Agriculture and Food took over the program and hired four teacher-consultants to teach the program to teachers.

In 1990 the Province decided that if the program was to grow, it had to be returned to the agricultural community and last year, a non-profit organization called Ontario Agri-Food Education Inc., was formed.

"Our base goal is to develop the Agriculture in the Classroom program," said Agri-Food communi-

cations officer Lori Jamieson in a recent interview.

"Our sole focus is to teach Ontario students, from Kindergarten to OAC, the role that agriculture plays in our lives. Agriculture is not enshrined in the curriculum but we are trying to find avenues to re-introduce it to the existing curriculum. For example, if you are teaching elementary students to count then we suggest that they count beans or cabbages. We feel there is a void in the classroom for this particular sector of the Ontario industry," Jamieson said.

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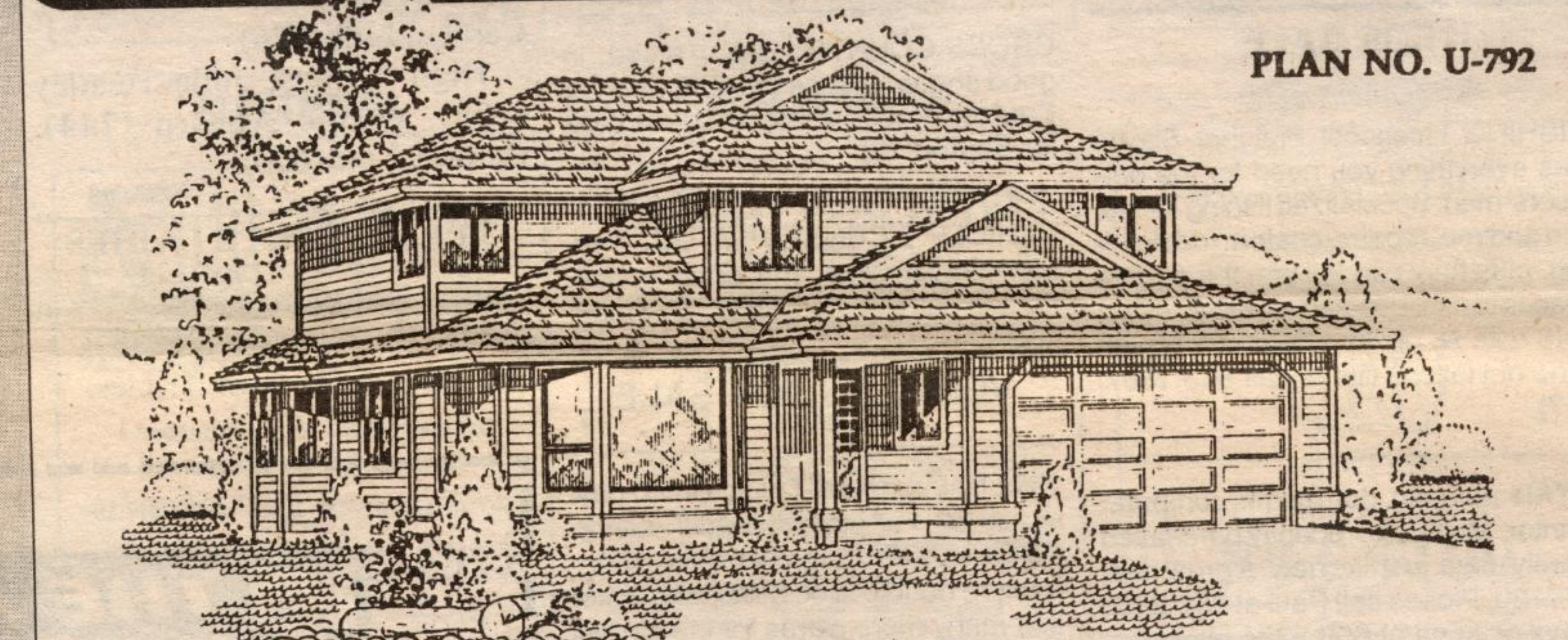
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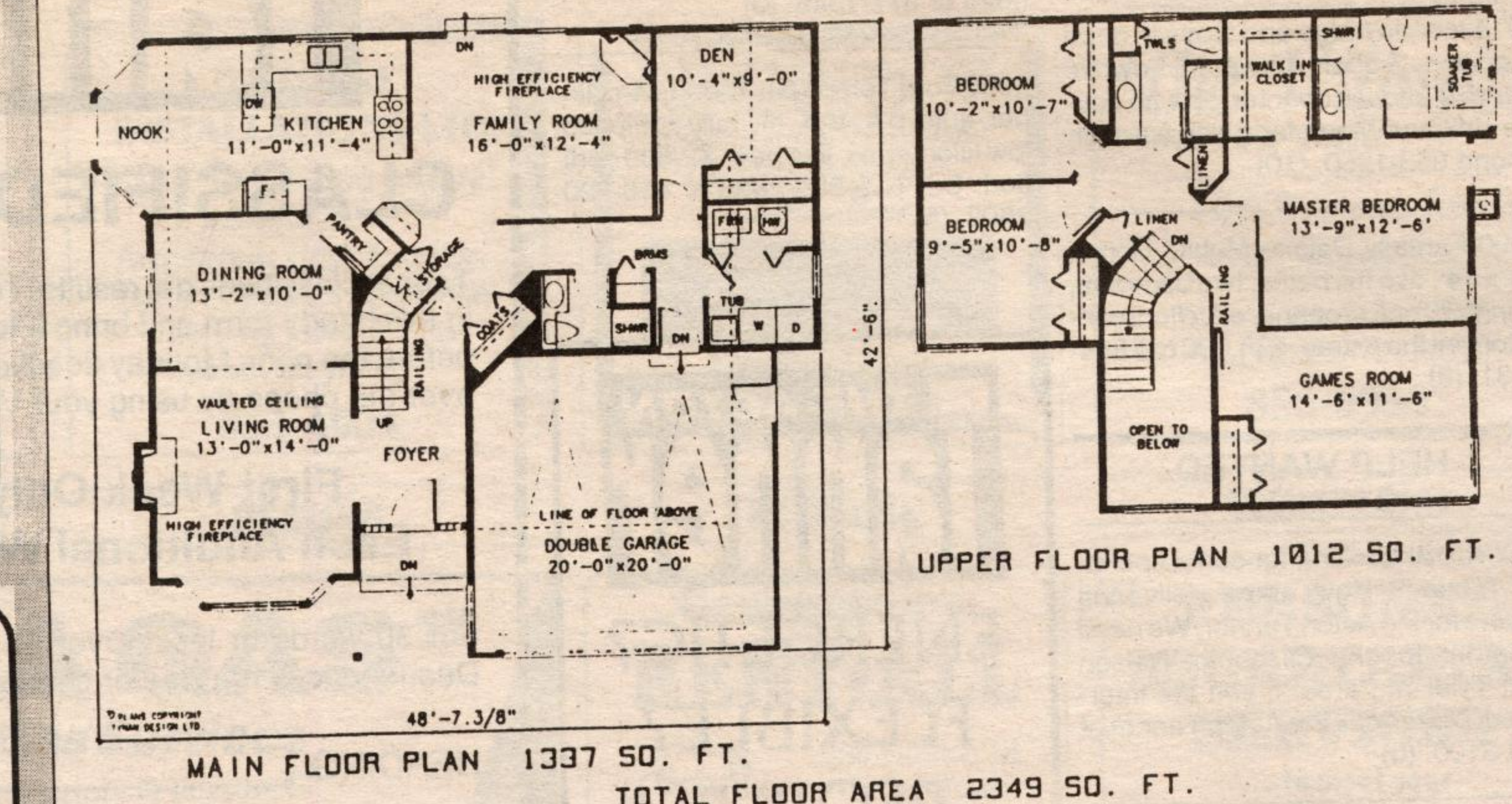
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