

'Back to the farm' at the Fair!

FALL FAIR PREVIEW

BY FRANCES NIBLOCK
The Acton Tanner

The significance of roots and the merits of experience will be underlined during the 82nd edition of the Acton Fall Fair on the Sept. 15, 16 and 17 weekend.

In this hi-tech world, Acton's fair continues to draw thousands of people - rural and urban - in a tradition that stretches back to the days when agriculture was king.

Like the early fairs, this one will have a baby contest, prize-winning produce and tests of strength for both machines and beasts.

Like the fairs of the 1820s and 1830s, Acton's fair will begin with a parade, will include the display and sale of "articles of domestic manufacture" and will end, for many, at the beer tent - today's

version of the tavern.

And as with past fairs, the 1995 fall fair will allow a glimpse of what life was like in 1913, when the first fair was held at the Prospect Park fairgrounds.

Early fairs have evolved from events staged to improve agricultural techniques and help provide good stock to celebrations of a way of life that is disappearing. Today's fairs are a form of communal recreation.

"I was at the Ontario Agricultural Museum a couple of years ago and was amazed that some school children from Toronto had no idea that milk came from a cow," former Acton Agricultural Society president Sherrill MacPherson sadly noted in an interview on Thursday.

"Children of today should know, when they look at a wheat field, that it is where their grain and cereal comes from. They should know that their milk and cheese comes from a cow and what the life of a farmer is like.

"That's what the Acton Fall Fair does. It celebrates a way of life," MacPherson said.

Esquesing's Agricultural Society staged fairs rotating between Acton and Georgetown beginning in 1889, and in 1908, the last joint fair was held in Acton.

In 1913 the Acton Agricultural Society staged its first fair at Prospect Park in an exhibition that was billed as "open to the world."

That year, \$800 was handed out in prize money. In 1994, prizes

totalled some \$28,000.

Baby shows ran from 1921 to 1953 and were reintroduced in 1965. This year organizers expect as many as 100 babies to be entered by proud parents.

The new cattle ties were built in 1930, the same year the first poultry show was held.

The first amplified sound was heard at the 1933 fair and in 1956, 90 contestants, some from the United States, entered the Central Junior Canada Pumpkin Championship.

In 1958 women formed their own organization and continue playing a leading role in ensuring the success of the fair.

Agricultural Society President Janis Fread thinks the fair has withstood the test of time, and improved because it is an "affordable form of community related entertainment."

"The Acton Fair has a nice atmosphere and shows off the small-town way of life. We don't have the demolition derbies that some exhibitions have.

"We are still a small, old-fashioned fair, and that is what people like," Fread explained in an interview on Thursday.

For Ag. Society past-president George Henderson, the traditions of the Acton fairs mean success.

"The fair has a home-coming effect on people. It gives people a sense of history, a sense of continuity and allows them to be part of a way of life that their great-grandfathers knew."

Baby items

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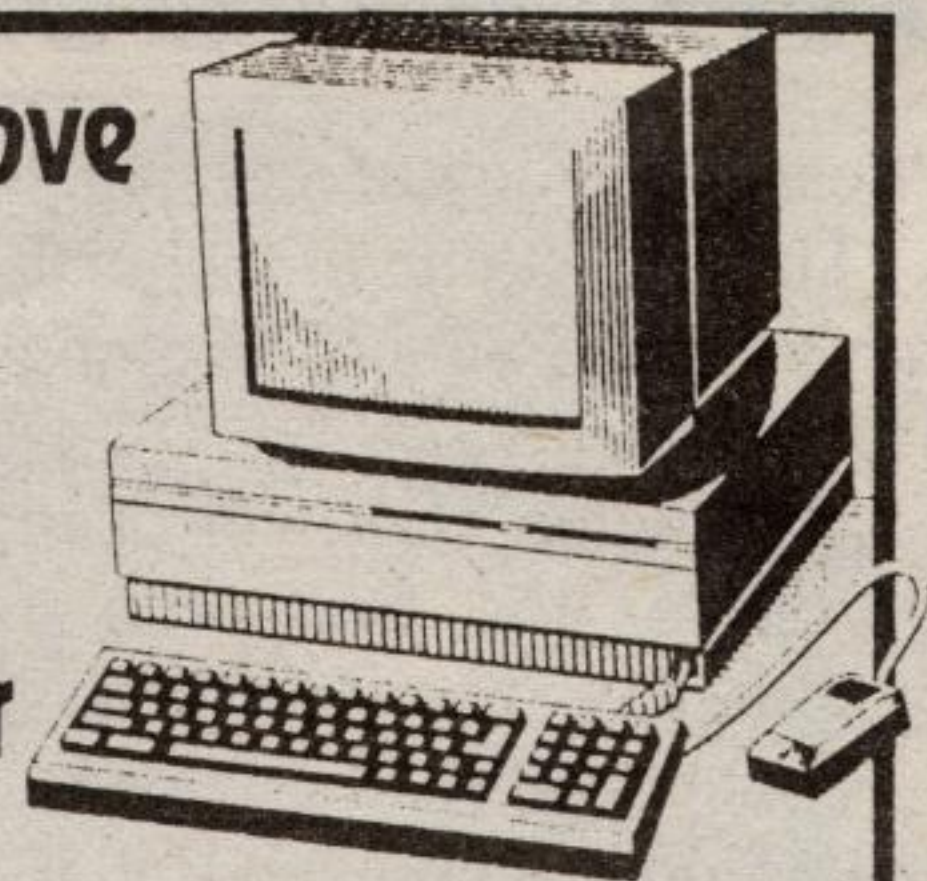
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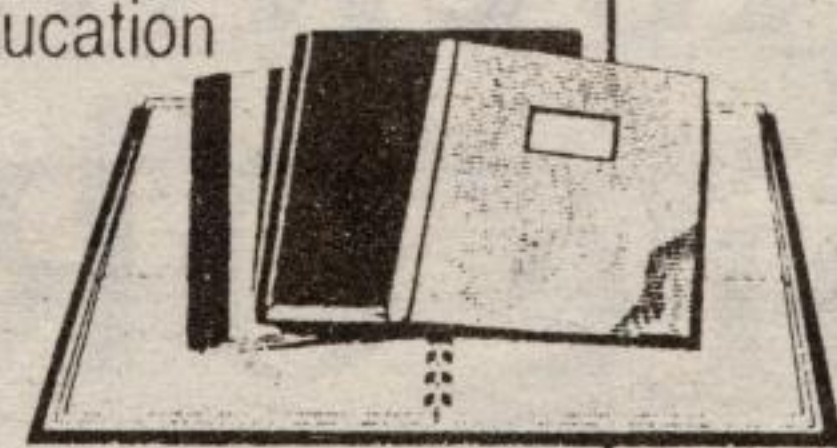
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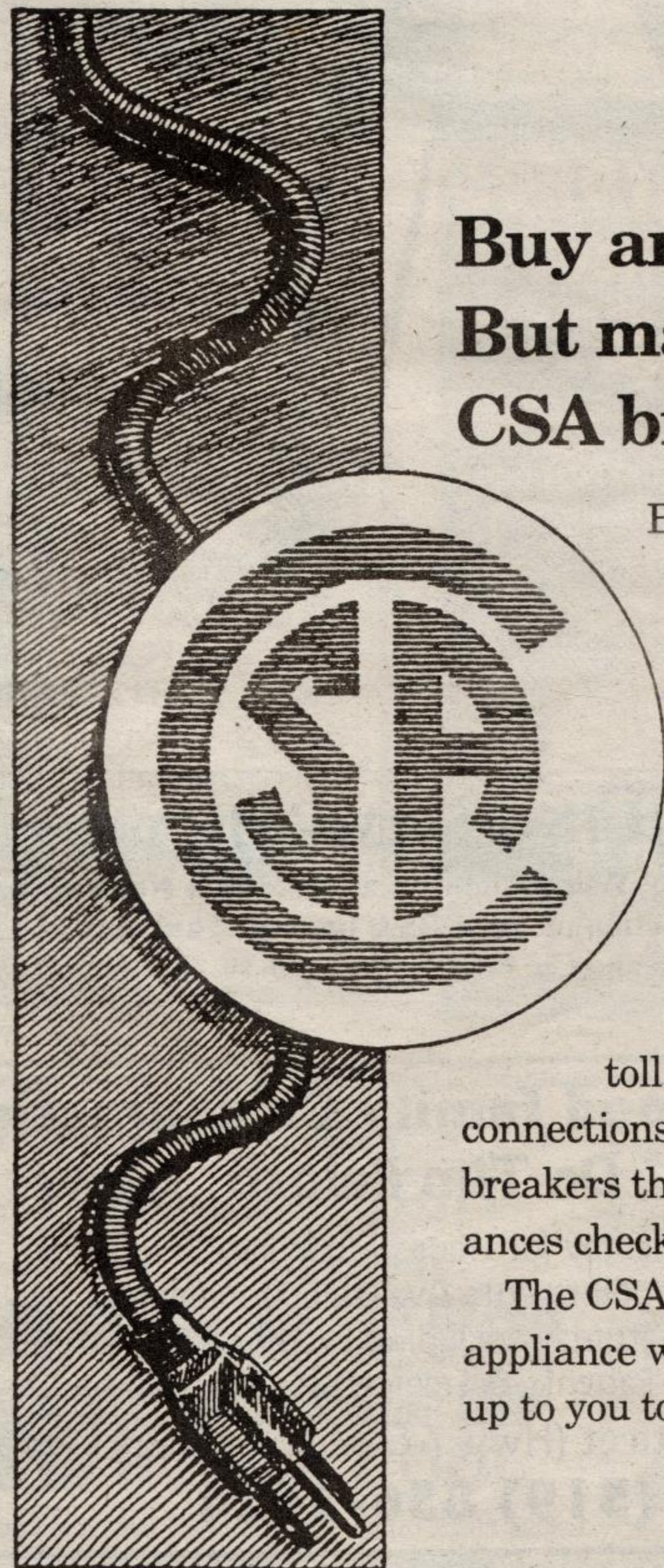
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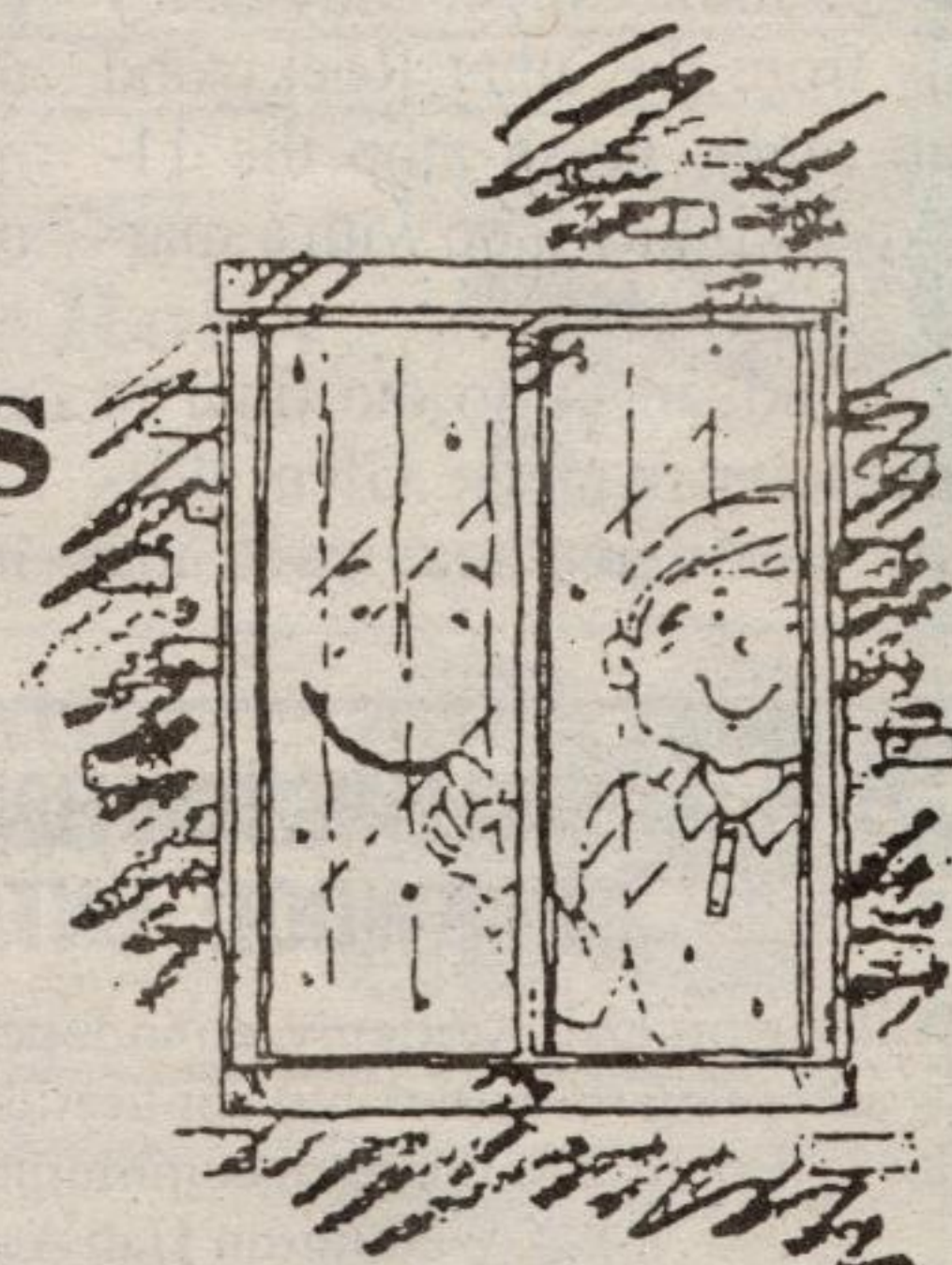
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ENERGY HINTS

Keeping your windows clear

Inside Panes - Condensation
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