

**Halton's Pages of the Past**

# Trace History of Dakota, Now Cedar Springs From Powder Mill, Through Tragedy to Camp

by GWEN CLARKE

**DAKOTA cum CEDAR SPRINGS**  
 "Cum" in the above title is used as denoting this story as being the history of not one but two related communities.

On the surface there seems little connection between a powder mill, a terrible tragedy and a beautiful summer camp. Yet we find an historical combination of all three at Cedar Springs near the village of Kibride, in Nelson Township.

Look at an early map of Halton County and you will not find Cedar Springs mentioned at all. But you will find a small village by the name of Dakota. Here, among the winding hills and dales, was once a large grist mill on the Twelve Mile Creek. This later became a flour and saw-mill. There was also a few settlers at Dakota, the first of whom was Thomas Simpson, an Englishman, who served as a cavalryman in the Napoleonic Wars and received three medals for distinguished service.

**Owner of First Horse**

In 1814 he was awarded 100 acres of land for loyalty to the Crown and proved himself as good a settler as he had been a soldier. He was a man of many parts and could knit, weave and sew as well as fell trees and clear the land. Mrs. Simpson was equally resourceful and was one of the first women to sell produce on the Hamilton market even though her only way of transporting the goods she had for sale was on horseback. Incidentally Mr. Simpson was the first man in the district to own a horse, at a time when all his neighbors were using oxen.

Mr. and Mrs. Simpson were also responsible for organizing "working bees" for the erection of the first kirk in the settlement, built on the site of where St. Paul's Presbyterian church now stands on the Dundas Highway. In the nearby churchyard, Thomas Simpson and his wife lie at rest, secure in the faith of their fathers which they had helped to maintain despite the rigours of pioneer life in a new country.

In 1857 a Powder Mill was set up in Dakota by the Canadian Powder Company. How the necessary heavy equipment reached Dakota is a story in itself. The Powder Press came by boat to Hamilton Beach, was moved by greased timbers to Wellington Square (Burlington) and then taken on a specially built sleigh, drawn by 13 yoke of oxen over the hills and valleys of Nelson township to the village of Dakota where it was re-assembled.

Once it was in operation the Powder Mill employed some 200 men and women and was always busy. This plant supplied much of the powder that was used to blast a right of way through the Rockies for the Canadian Pacific Railway. Eventually ownership of the mills was transferred to the Hamilton Powder Company with Edward Corlett as manager.

On October 9, 1884, came tragedy. The Powder Mill literally blew up. Machinery, buildings and human bodies disintegrated in the air. Fortunately the explosion occurred during the noon hour with only six men on duty. Of these four were killed instantly, one died the same night, and one, though badly injured, survived. One man, according to a local story, standing some distance from the explosion, had his false teeth blown out of his mouth. They were recovered a year later two miles away.

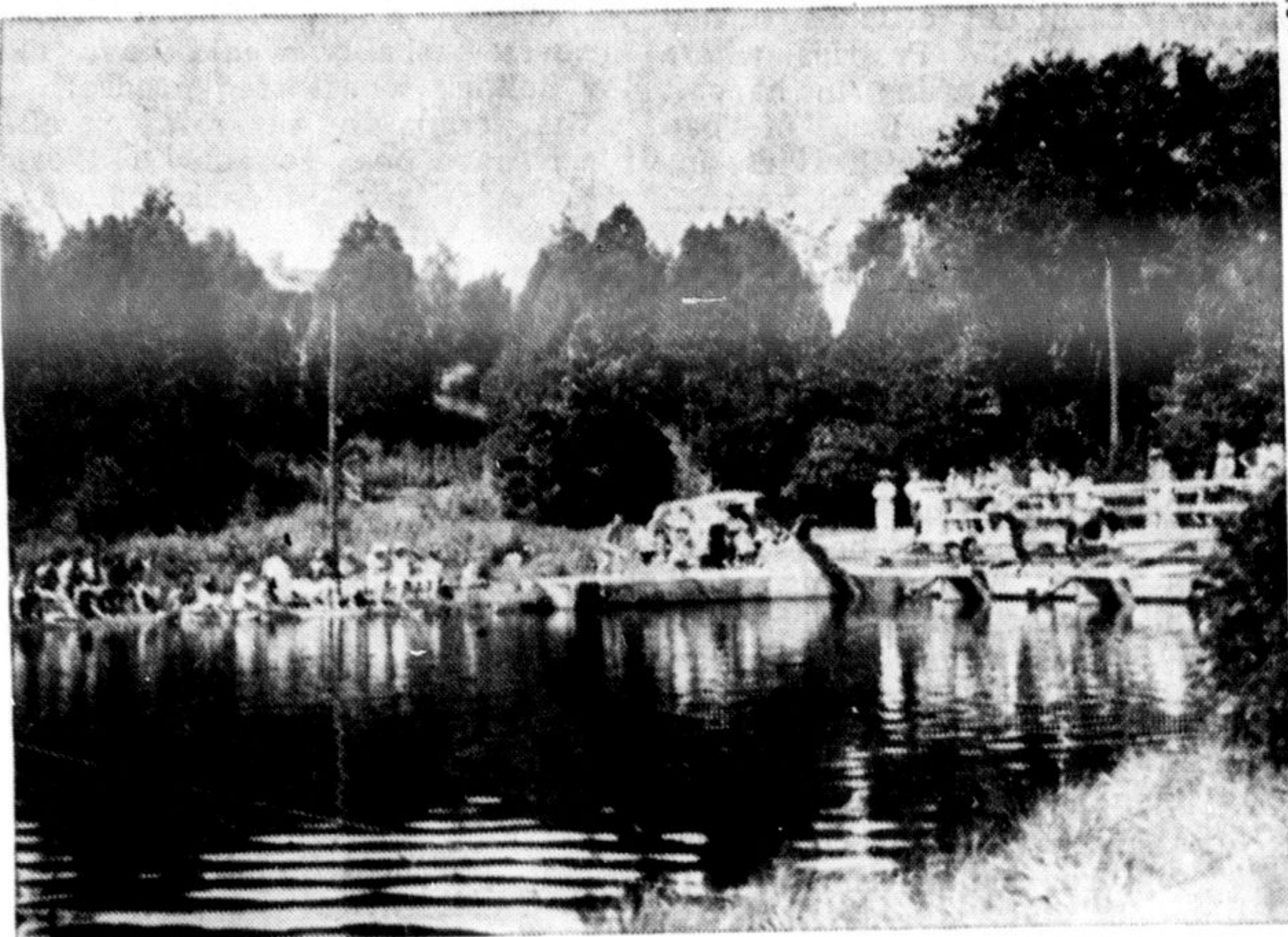
The mill was never rebuilt and 200 men were left without employment. It was a fatality, not only to the men who died, but to the industry of Dakota and the neighboring village of Cumminsville. Families moved away to any district where the men could find work. Eventually the villages were practically deserted.

**Builds Rustic Cabins**

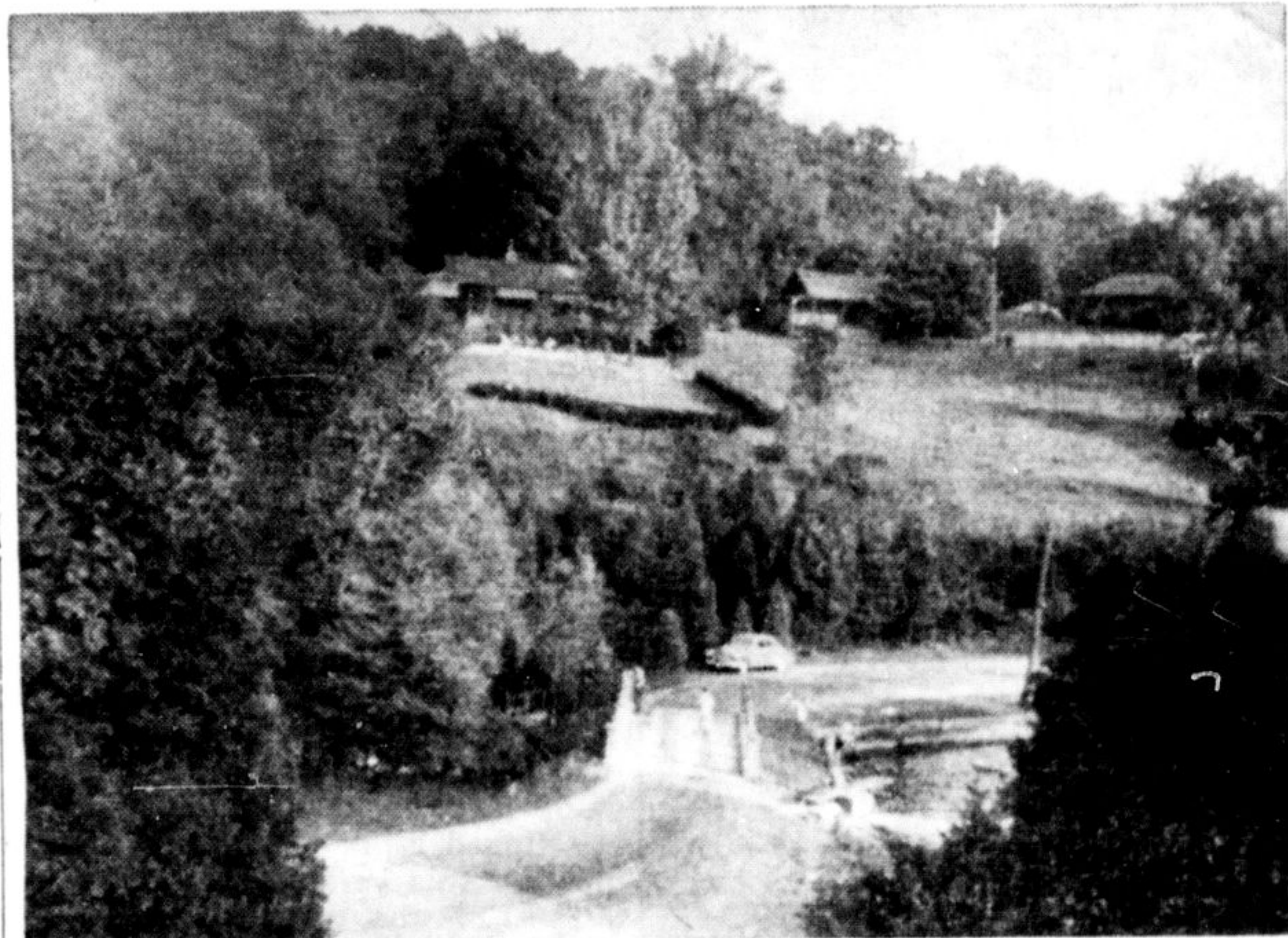
But Mr. Corlett stayed on. He bought the land from the Hamilton Company where the Powder Mill had stood and here he planted a large apple orchard and in time built up a good export business in apples to overseas markets.

In 1885 W. D. Flatt purchased a large tract of virgin pine at the north end of the powder plant site and soon found a ready market for fine timber. But it was Mr. Flatt's nature to build rather than destroy. The unspoiled beauty of the place, with its wooded hills and rippling creek possessed him. Gradually an idea took form. Here was a natural setting for ideal community life. First, he realized, there must be cabins in which people might live; recreational facilities which all might enjoy; improved roadways and more cleared land.

So in 1924 Mr. Flatt purchased land adjacent to his present property, including the apple orchards, and



Cedar Springs Community Swimming Pool



Bird's Eye View of Some of the Cabins

after two years of endless work and intensive planning, the first rustic cabins were ready for occupancy and were offered for sale. That was just the beginning. By 1932 78 cabins had been built and sold to families in Ontario, New York and Pennsylvania. There are now 80 cabins—which number is considered the desirable maximum.

Eventually Mr. Flatt relinquished his personal control and the project became known as the Cedar Springs Community Club.

**Quiet Restfulness**

Each cabin owner is responsible for the upkeep of his own property. Receipts and expenditures are shared as the club is entirely a non-profit organization. In summer the camp is an ideal spot where city folk may relax and enjoy the quiet restfulness of country life at its best. There is an excellent golf course, bowling green, swimming pool and community hall. The hall was originally a barn built on the site of the powder mill. It is used during the week for dinner parties, card parties and concerts. And on Sunday for religious services.

In winter the golf course becomes a ski trail, complete with a motor-operated tow-line and an 8 foot ski jump. At a safe distance there are also toboggan slides providing fun and exercise for the youngsters.

Mr. George Brenholtz, who, with his family, lives at the camp the year round, is the genial and ef-

ficient managing-director and secretary of the Community Club. Mr. Brenholtz is also Reeve of Nelson Township and chairman of the County Conservation and Reforestation Committee. At Cedar Springs Mr. Brenholtz puts into practice his theories regarding reforestation as year by year more young trees are planted within the community grounds.

Following the death of Mr. W. D. Flatt, very fine entrance gates to Cedar Springs were erected as a fitting memorial to Mr. Flatt's courage and foresight. Foresight which restored to the County of Halton a district of surpassing beauty, covering the scars of what had once been the scene of a terrible disaster.

(Next feature—"Early Fall Fairs")  
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Milton Fair this year on September 24th and 25th.

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**Plan Second Park Approve Creek Site**

With Coronation Park, on the lake-front, successfully established and drawing large crowds of people, Trafalgar Township is now proceeding to acquire another park site, on the Sixteen-Mile Creek. At its recent meeting the township council passed a motion instructing the solicitor to arrange for the survey and purchase of the W. Lawrence property, making necessary provisions for public access to the water.

The purchase price of the property is \$5,500. It is seven acres in extent, and according to Councillor Ernest Henderson, a member of the parks committee who looked it over, is an ideal park site. Part of the land is flats, and part is high wooded banks. The lower portion would make an excellent picnic ground, Mr. Henderson pointed out.

Purchase of the property was recommended by the parks commission in a report, which stated that this was the only site available of seven on the Sixteen and Twelve Mile creeks investigated by the Committee, none of the other owners being willing to sell at the present time.

**Time To Buy**

"If we wait until that section of the township is developed before purchasing a park site we are going to have to pay what other municipalities are paying," said Councillor Donald Bath, chairman of the committee. "They are having to pay hundreds of thousands of dollars to get river valley sites.

**Age is Relative**

When a person 50 years or over loses his job, he is faced with the terrible prospect of not being able to find employment. . . . Old age shouldn't be looked upon as a sign of going downhill. Instead it should be respected and given its proper place in society.

—Kamloops (B.C.) Sentinel

We have river properties available that are very picturesque. Even if we didn't do anything with this property now, we would be keeping it for the people."

**50 Homes This Year**

J. Kleinstein, was given permission to develop 40 percent, or 125, of his 311 lots on the Ninth and Fourth Lines of Trafalgar.

Mr. Kleinstein told Council he planned to build 50 homes on the Ninth Line this year, and 75 on his subdivision just west of the Fourth Line.

**No Industry Yet**

"You can't build them all in the first year," said Reeve Emerson Ford. "Have you any industry coming into your subdivisions?"

"I have some that promised to come in," said Dr. Kleinstein, "but none coming right away."

Realtor H. G. Schreiber and motel owner Dan Marchuk, Queen Elizabeth Way West, were told by Council that they could not consider enlarging Mr. Marchuk's motel till after the zoning by-law had been approved.

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Lynda shows typical little-girl interest in her mother's telephone call; that's 18-month-old Donna, perched in her high chair.

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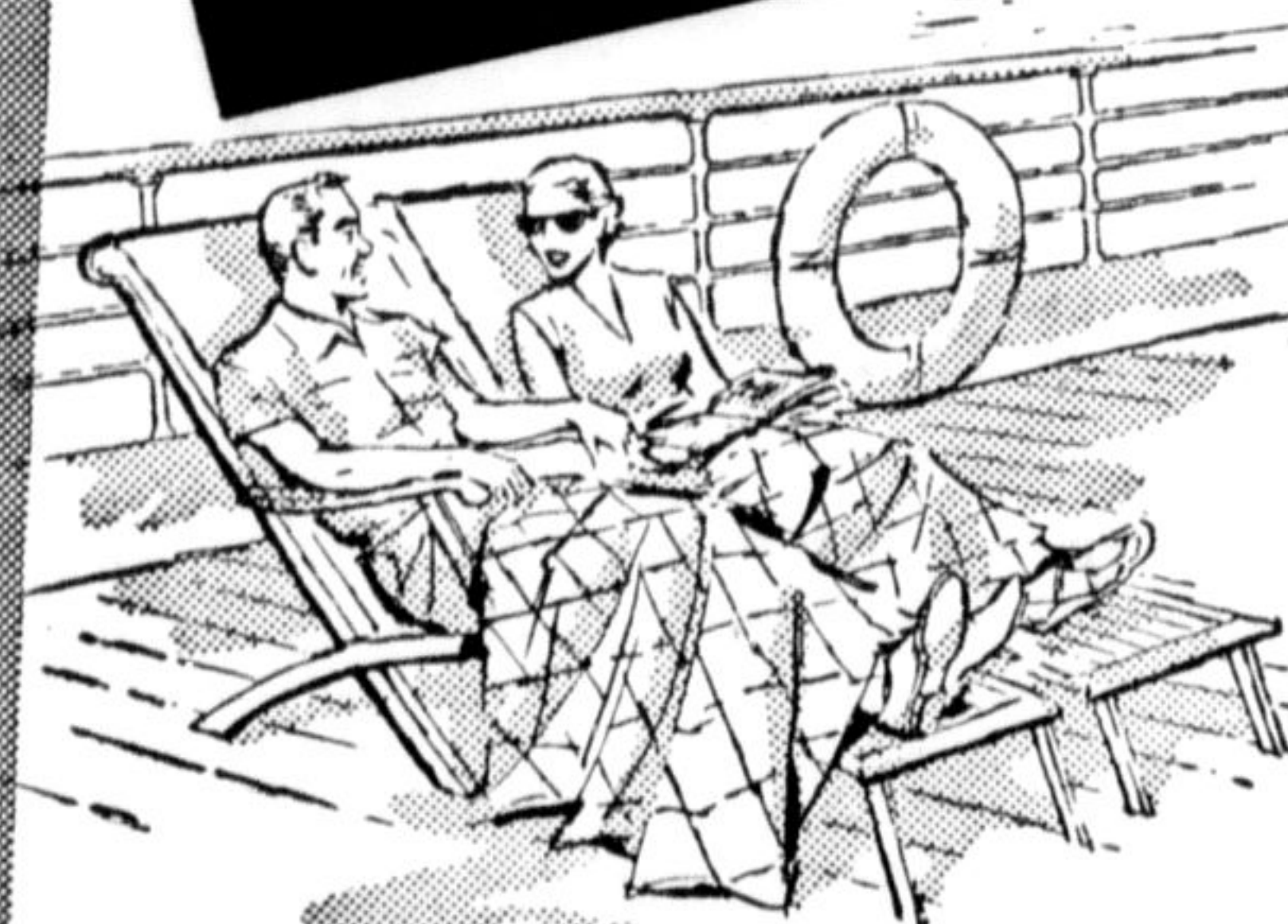
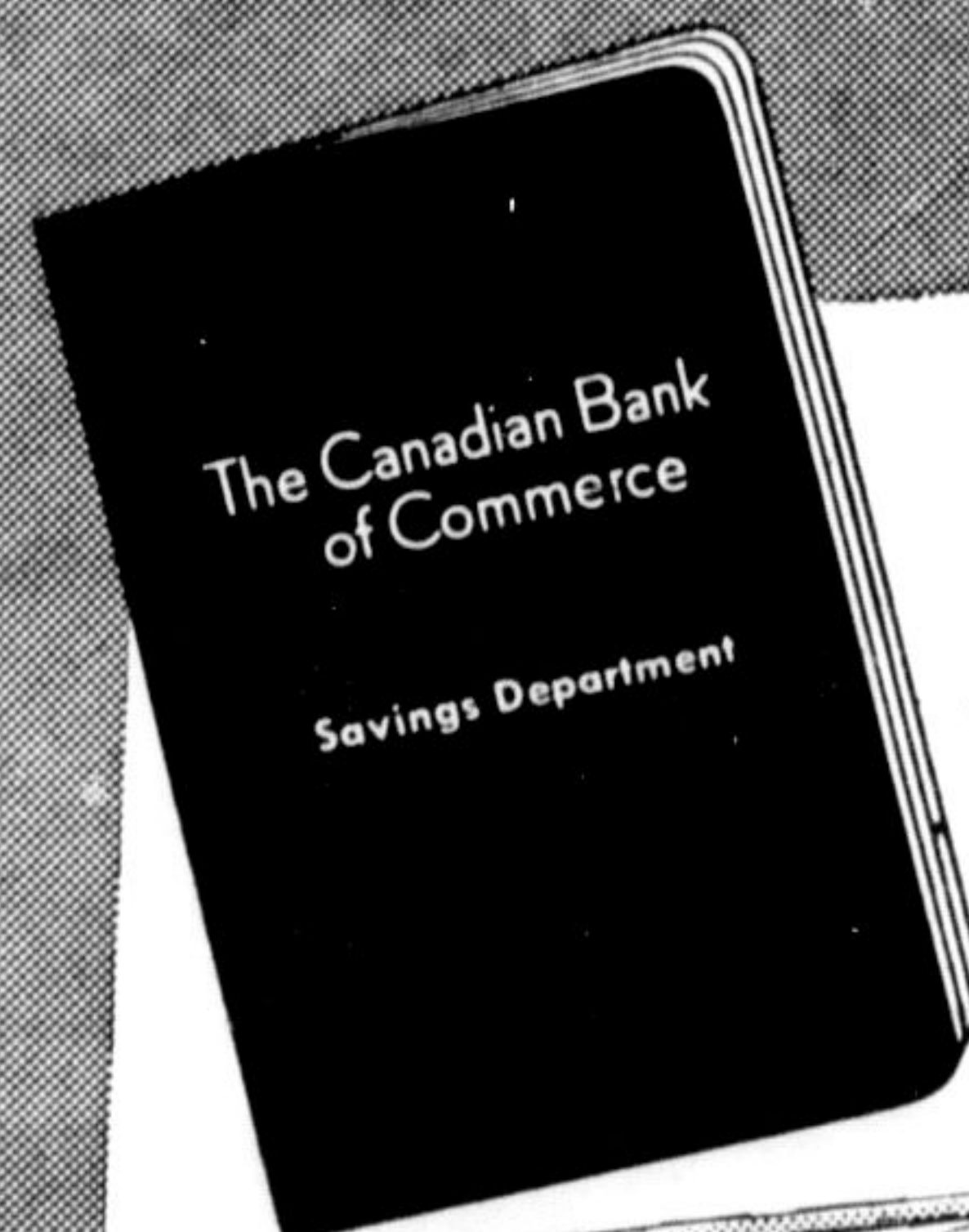
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