

Arts & Entertainment

New book takes readers back to early 20th century Milton

By **STEPHANIE THIESSEN**
The Champion

Once again, Milton was facing further development and residents weren't sure if they wanted the change.

Although that scenario could describe a recent all-candidates meeting, it's of a time almost a century ago when the arrival of the automobile was causing quite a stir.

A time long ago has been brought to life by the late Mel Robinson in his newly-published book, *Memories of Milton*.

Edited by Jim Dills and Ken Lamb and published by the Milton Historical Society, the book takes readers back to early 20th century Milton.

Memories of Milton is the 13th publication of the Milton Historical Society. The 218-page book contains 150 black and white photos and includes anecdotal stories about everything from going to the barber to the Saturday night downtown hustle and bustle.

Attitudes back then weren't much different from those today with regard to growth, Mr. Dills said, adding that with the word 'development' on everyone's lips, it's a great time for the book to be released. "When the town expanded (in the early 1900s), there was some chagrin about development and the affect it would have. But people gradually accepted it," he said, adding, "A town is what people make it to be. We're all resistant to change, but so far we haven't invented an alternative."

The manuscript was carefully proofread and edited by Mr. Lamb alongside Mr. Dills.

Mr. Lamb counts his favourite parts of the book the stories about families and what kids did for fun — such as ride down the Sixteen Mile Creek on large chunks of ice.

The book is a combination of Mr. Robinson's own experiences and research from early 20th century issues of *The Canadian Champion*. "He contributes a lot as a historian, and also as an artist, drawing on his experiences," Mr. Lamb said.

Mr. Dills said he hopes the book brings a sense of unity to Milton. "I hope new people and long-time residents both find some kind of warmth within the context and an awareness of how much Milton has changed."

The idea for the book came to Mr. Dills more than 25 years ago when he was the publisher of *The Champion*. Mr. Dills said he asked Mr. Robinson if he'd write some columns based on his early recollections of life in Milton. The ultimate goal was to gather the columns together and write a book.

From 1977 until 1981, Mr. Robinson wrote columns for *The Champion*. They captured significant developments in town, but also mundane happenings, Mr. Dills said, such as cattle drives along Bronte Street.

The project was delayed for many years, and Mr. Robinson died in 1988. Then, a couple of years ago, Mr. Dills decided the time was right to publish the book. It became his life, he said.

"I spent a year of my life on it," he said. "I tend to live with a project. It consumes a lot more than is visible."

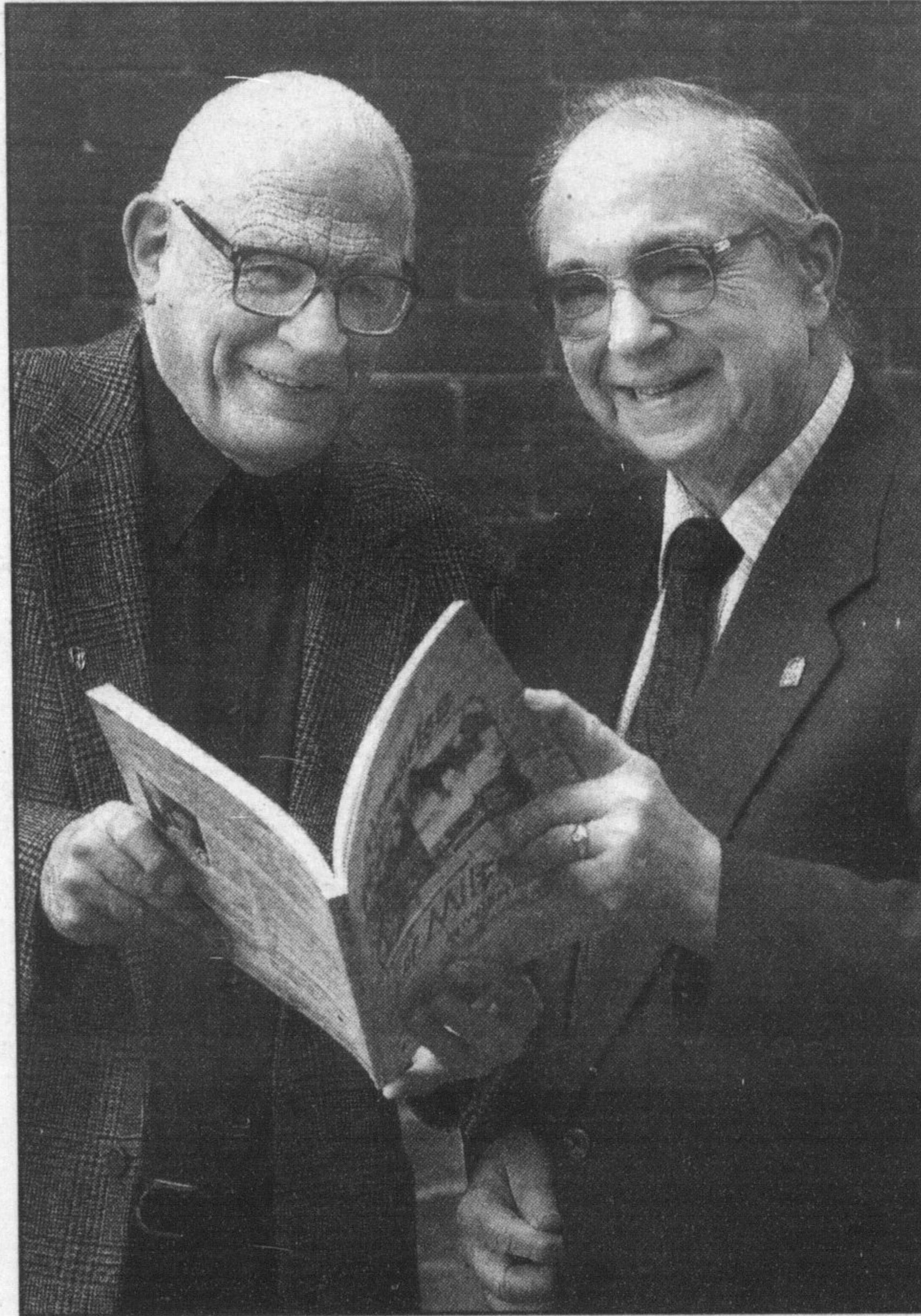


Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Co-editors Ken Lamb (left) and Jim Dills show off a copy of the newly-released *Memories of Milton*.

With the help of volunteers from the Milton Historical Society, Mr. Robinson's columns were typed up, photos were matched to the columns and the text was edited, Mr. Dills said.

Mr. Dills said he's confident Mr. Robinson would be pleased with the final product.

"Mel's dead, but his memories live on," he said.

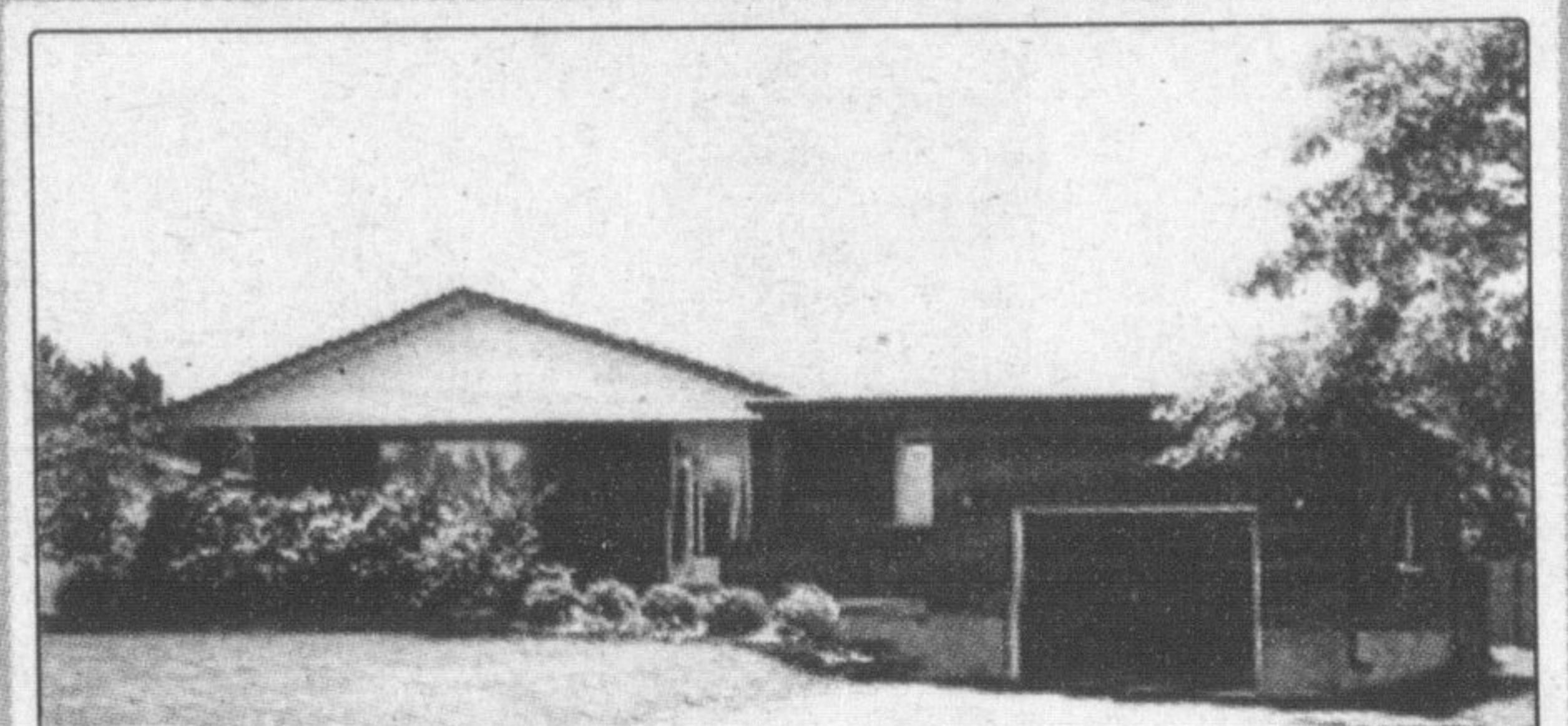
Photos came from sources including Mr. Dills' private collection, the archives of the Milton Historical Society and the Halton Region Museum, Mr. Dills said.

Funding for the project was provided by the Town of Milton's Community Fund.

Memories of Milton is available for \$24.95 from the Milton Historical Society, 24 James St., or by calling (905) 878-1146. It's also available at Spice O' Life, Harris Stationery and Global Genealogy, all located in downtown Milton, as well as Coles at Milton Mall.

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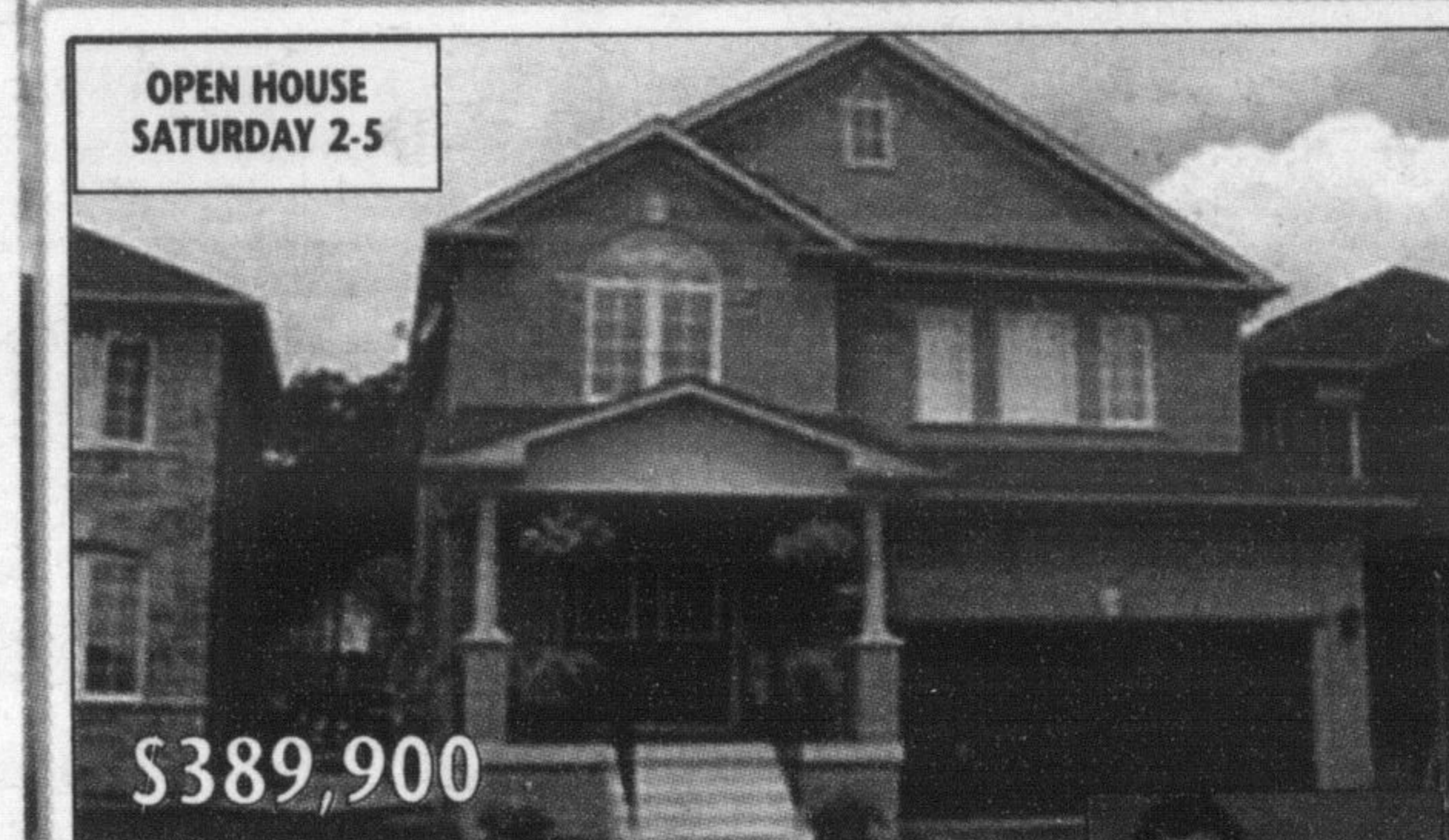
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