

Fireplaces: A newer cleaner generation

The care and feeding of a fire-place is too much of a hassle for some homeowners, who are content with not hearing the fire crackling or smelling the scent of burning wood.

In well-insulated houses, fireplaces can interfere with central heating systems. Now that houses have been made tighter to conserve heat, fireplaces will hunt down air wherever they can find it, and they rob the air needed for proper combustion in conventional furnaces.

Most fire-places and wood-stoves built more than two years ago aren't efficient as heating sources and the smoke that escapes through the chimney spews contaminants.

A new generation of clean-burning fireplaces is now available and these offer up to 75-percent efficiency. Most of these are manufactured in Canada.

Another downside to fireplaces is that they don't improve with age: the older they get, the more troublesome they become. Si if you fall in love with a vintage house that has a quaint fireplace used by the original owners to bake bread, apply the consumer credo of "Buyer Beware."

They are a real headache because they aren't maintained properly and very rarely will you find a house conforming to regulations

because they are so old.

Fireplaces and hearths in old houses were supported with easily combustible wood beams, unlike the reinforced concrete or steel used in more modern houses. The defects in old fireplaces are hidden and become apparent when it's too late to correct.

The most dangerous scenario works this way: A small crack left untouched inside the chimney will expand with use and at some point fire will creep into the walls and floors and before it is detected the fire has already done a great deal of damage.

The key to living safely with your fireplace is regular mainte-

nance and checks by a qualified chimney inspector who can spot potential trouble that cannot always be seen.

Creosote is a tarry buildup of combustible residues from fire-place fuels, which can lead to dangerous chimney fires.

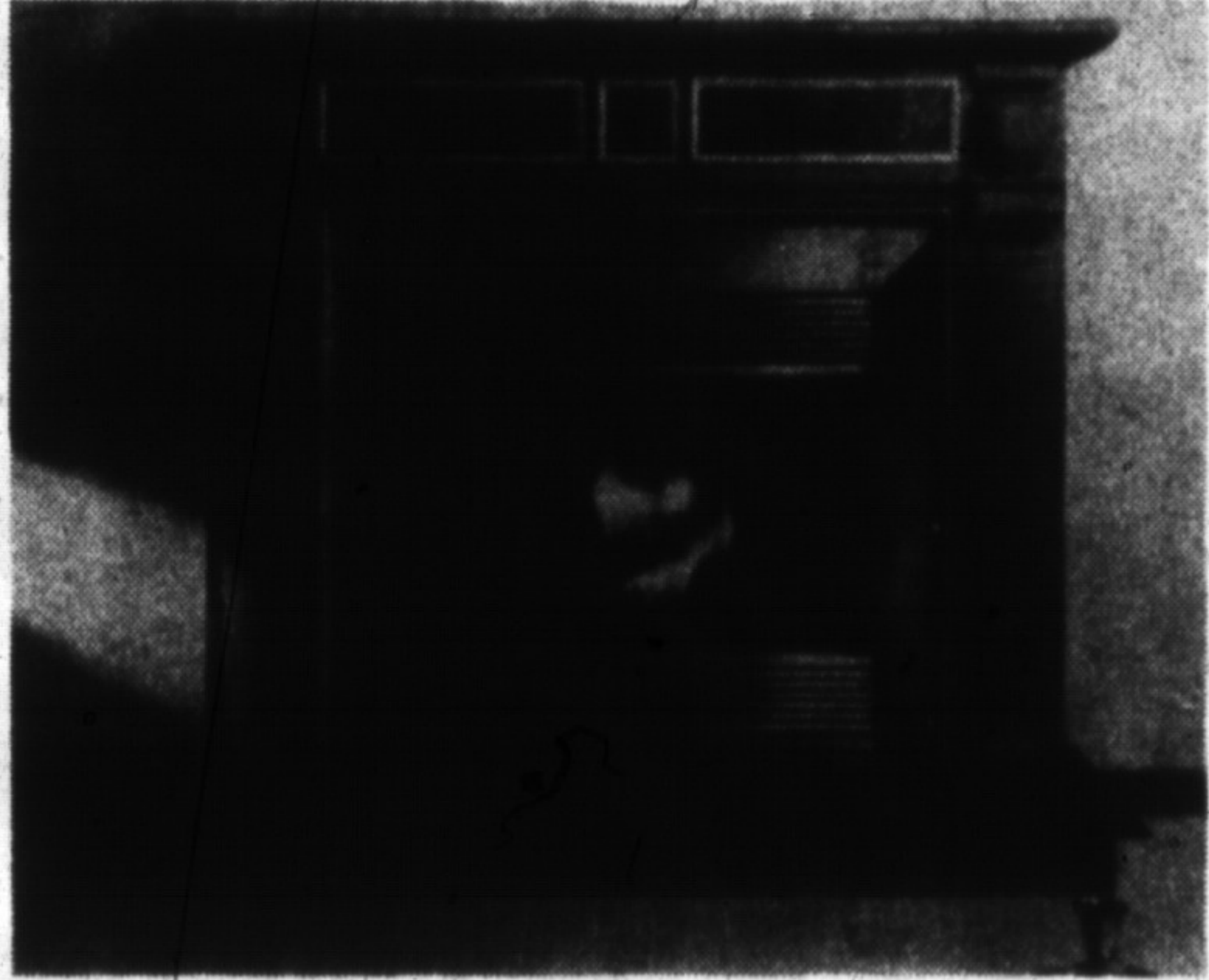
Here are some other tips for keeping a chimney working well:

- Never use a fireplace when there is a fog; the smoke won't rise.
- Open the damper 10 minutes before using fireplace for pre-heating and to make sure there is a normal upward movement of air through the chimney.

- Pre-heat with a ball of newspaper — held in tongs to avoid burning hands.
- During pre-heating, open a window in case smoke puffs into the room.
- Use only dry wood or artificial

logs, which are said to burn cleaner.

- Never use your fireplace as a garbage incinerator.
- Make certain that all fireplaces, stoves and glass doors are ULC or CSA approved.



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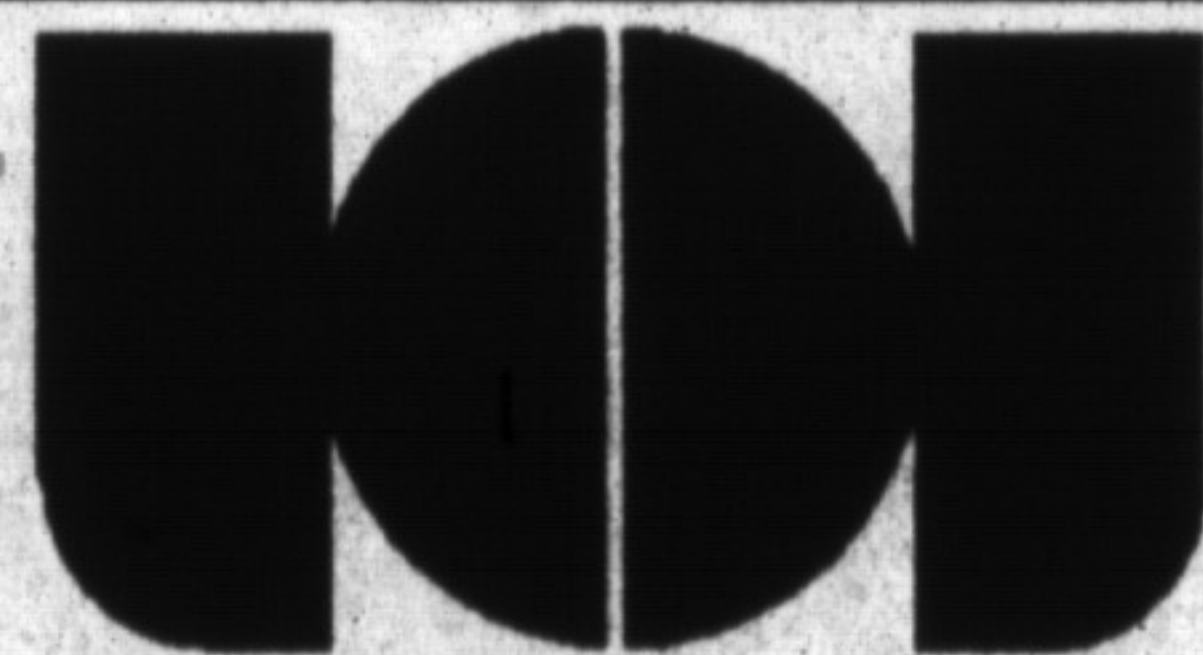
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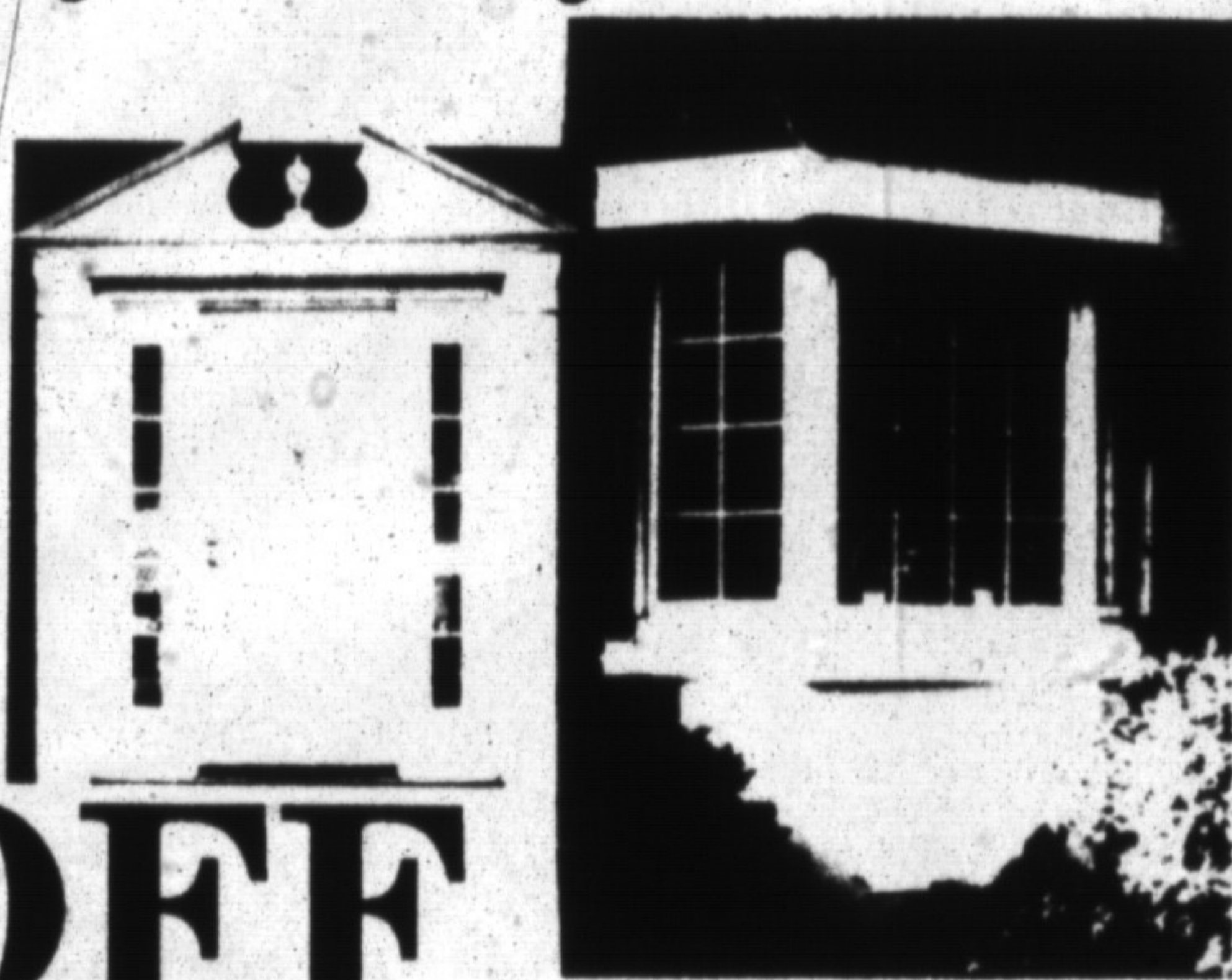
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