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OF PROGRESS

PENETANGUISHENE 1875 1975

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The Beck family

The Becks are one of the dominant families in Penetanguishene's history largely because of the lumbering king, Charles Beck. Here is

a family picture. The three children in the front row from left to right are: Alfred, George (Adden), and William Beck. In the

middle row are: Emilie (Milla), Charles and his wife Emilie Beck. Standing in the back row from left to right are: Walter, Mary, Lovina, Jake and Charlie Beck.

Charles Beck - Penetanguishene's lumber king

The lumbering industry dominated Penetanguishene's early history as a municipality and Charles Beck was king of the lumbermen.

Beck was a strong man who compiled a massive fortune in the lumbering business. A pamphlet published in the 1920's (Penetanguishene and the Men Behind Its Industries by William Gilmour) notes of

Beck and his lumbering interests that, "the business, big and vital, bears the stamp of its founder. By a strong physique and a no less vigorous mind, Mr. Beck beat down for himself a path into the wilderness and took rich toll of the forest despite the grim fingers which hold its treasure in such an unyielding grip."

Other lumbering mills would come later, but for

years Beck's lumbering interests were the backbone of the town. The extent of Charles Beck's control over the town of Penetanguishene is illustrated by the fact that he became its first Mayor in 1882 and also by the way in which he paid his employees. Workers were paid partly with Canadian currency and partly with Beck money. Beck's money was only good at his store on Burke Street,

now the Penetanguishene Museum.

When Charles Beck died in 1915, the C. Beck Lumbering Company was taken over by his son William. At that time the two large mills operated from early spring to the late fall every year, producing 15,000,000 feet of lumber per season. In addition there were two box factories, one in Penetanguishene, the other in Toronto, working the

year round with an annual output of 5,000,000 feet of lumber made into boxes.

When Charles Beck died he left an estimated 10 million dollars in assets. But the lumbering industry through which he made his fortune would eventually die too, a victim of mismanagement which allowed relentless cutting but practiced little or no reforestation.

• Fifth in a series of 13 •

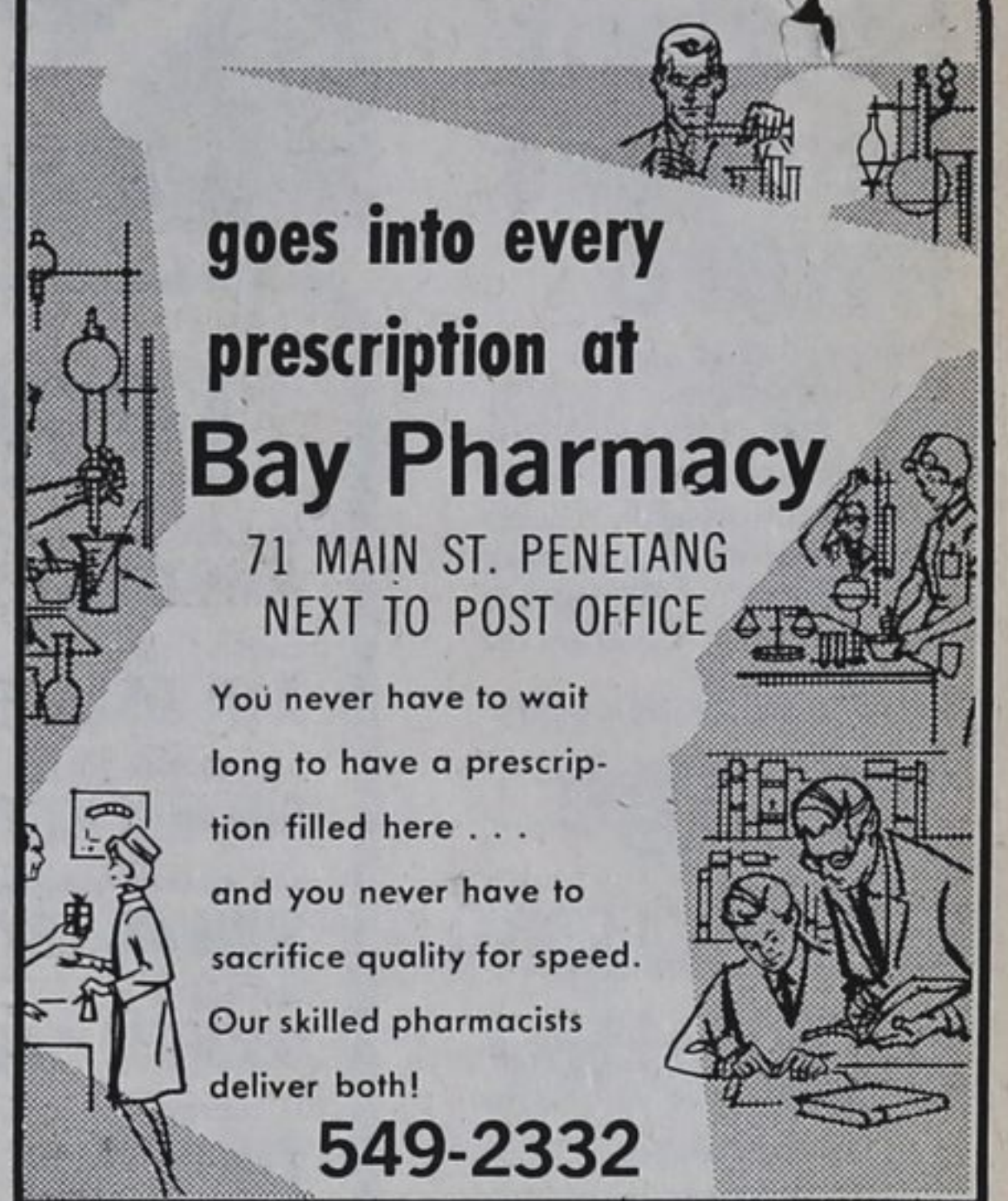
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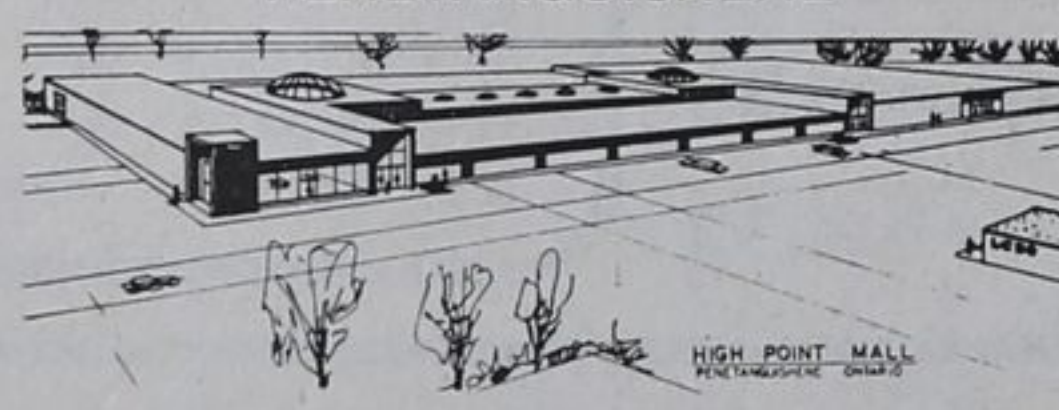
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