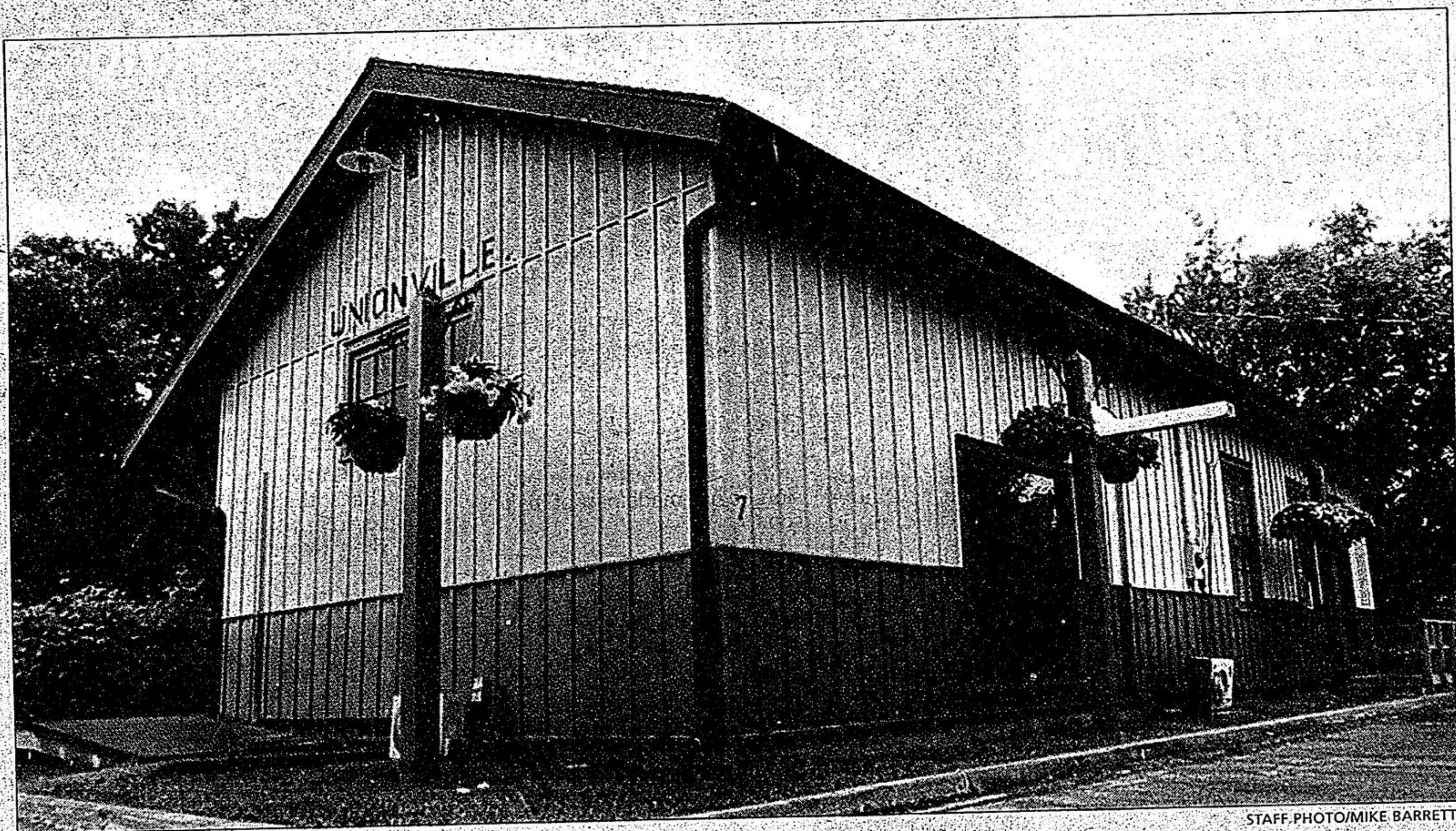


PAGES



STAFF PHOTO/MIKE BARRETT

The Unionville railway station is one of five York Region stations discussed in a new book by author Ron Brown.

Helping heritage buildings on the rails

Author underlines plight of heritage railway stations

BY CHRISSIE O'BRIEN
Special

Ron Brown is a trained town planner, but a writer of history at heart.

Combine the two professions and he knows how urban expansion can obliterate evidence of our past.

Five York Region heritage sites are featured in a new book by the Canadian author and photographer called *The Last Stop: Ontario's Heritage Railway Stations*.

Maintenance of heritage sites is increasingly important as Ontario's population grows, Mr. Brown said.

"Urban sprawl jars people out of their complacency. I think urban sprawl enhances the likelihood of survival of heritage stations. As sprawl and growth threat-

en our heritage, people become more aware of it," he said in an interview.

In his book, Mr. Brown looks at 55 train stations across Ontario. Each chapter examines the history of the commuter routes that promoted the construction of the stations, uses of the sites and history of the buildings since their construction.

Heritage train stations in Markham, Unionville, Maple, Newmarket and Aurora are featured in the book.

"Ron Brown is one of the few people who writes about heritage train stations in Ontario," said Diane Waldock of Polar Bear Press, publisher of *The Last Stop*. "We want to popularize these stations and make them accessible to readers."

Ms Waldock said Mr. Brown had to write a second volume about stations across Canada because so many historical sites had been neglected and had to be preserved.

"The purpose of the book was to focus on stations that had been federally designated and were most threatened," Mr. Brown explained. "They could only be designated federally because they were active stations — railway-owned and untouchable by provincial legislation."

"The 1988 legislation was solely to protect stations, it was a private member's bill designating more than 50 stations in Ontario, including the five we're talking about."

In the book's introduction, Mr. Brown says the station has to be older than 50 years to achieve heritage designation.

"Examine the significance of the station's history, how well the station illustrates the development of the community, the aesthetic or visual quality of the station and the technical or functional quality."

"Also important is the relationship between the station and the area in which it is associated and the nature of the station's identity with the community."

These criteria and the heritage designation they provide are the saving grace for many buildings. Once they are designated, the stations are eligible for restoration funding, which is often used to turn them into museums or retail locations.

For Mr. Brown, the mission to save heritage railway stations is more than legislation and designation.

"There was a groundswell of outrage after (Canadian Pacific) demolished a heritage station in the middle of the night for an extra track in West Toronto near Weston Road. That instigated an MPP to launch the private member's bill."

"I was never directly involved in that, but it got me writing my first book, *The Train Doesn't Pass Here Anymore*."

The Aurora, Markham, Unionville, Newmarket and Maple train stations, according to Mr. Brown's book, have all the interest-

See UNIONVILLE, page 21.

Gangster audiotape soaked in blood

Booktape: *Gangster*, by Lorenzo Carcaterra, Bantam Doubleday Dell Audio Publishing (abridged), six hours on four cassettes, \$38.95

BY ROY GREEN
Staff Writer

Ever since *The Godfather*, gangster stories have flown off the shelves. Though few can measure up to Mario Puzzo's classic novel of the Corleone family, there are lots of tales of dons and captains, made men and wiseguys and, of course, goodfellas.

Lorenzo Carcaterra first cashed in on this wave a few years back with *Sleepers*, the tale of shocking physical and sexual abuse of inmates in a reform school.

... a riveting story about a powerful and ruthless mob boss and his protege, the young man he rescues from an uncaring foster home.

It was a rollicking good story and was made into a film featuring Brad Pitt and Robert DeNiro. But it is marred by the fact the author continues to insist it is a true story — in fact, he says, a story from his own childhood.

In *Gangster* he makes no such claim and that's just as well because some of the events therein clearly stretch believability, even for a novel.

A father killing his young son to keep him from being raised by a mobster is one of these.

But they don't stand in the way of a riveting story about a powerful and ruthless mob boss and his protege, the young man he rescues from an uncaring foster home.

See IRISH, page 21.

Flyer

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