

Unionville station best restored in region

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ing aspects of the story he wants to tell of Ontario's heritage landmarks.

Mr. Brown says he respects the work the Markham Village Conservancy has done to improve the stations in Markham.

"It takes political will, community desire and money and you don't often find all three coming together. Markham did everything right to keep up the station."

It is for this reason Mr. Brown chose to write the stories.

Of the five York Region stations mentioned, only Markham and Aurora are still in use. GO Transit commuters head for Union Station in Toronto from the station on Main Street, Markham.

In his book Mr. Brown writes: "Spurred on by a heritage-conscious community, GO Transit began a major restoration of the Aurora station."

He said the building was altered to accommodate GO travellers, yet the transit company

played a major part of maintaining the heritage flavour.

"In a lot of cases, the stations in the book are owned by transit companies like VIA or GO and they are responsible for upkeep and keeping them as heritage sites," Mr. Brown said.

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The Newmarket station is one heritage building that became part of the industry surrounding it. After being replaced by the GO station at Tannery Mall, the building received heritage designation. For a time, it was the office of a local MP and is now home to the

Newmarket Chamber of Commerce.

The towns of Richmond Hill and Maple grew up around the railway line that once came to the Maple station

Mr. Brown writes: "A visit to the Maple station becomes like a step back in time, a visual refuge from traffic and sprawl."

The station in Unionville is perhaps the best restored of the York Region buildings, which Mr. Brown attributes to its location on the protected streets of Heritage Unionville. He's also a fan of the Markham station.

"The Town of Markham was willing to provide the railway with assistance because both the stations are first-generation, which is remarkable," he said.

"Built in 1871, Unionville is one of the few first-generation stations that has survived."

"What makes this even more astounding," Mr. Brown writes, "is that it was one of the simplest stations on the line and has to contend with the station in Markham."

Knowing intimate details

WHERE THEY ARE

The York Region entries in Ron Brown's book on Ontario's heritage railway stations:

• Markham station (1868) is on Main Street (Hwy. 48) just north of Parkway Avenue.

• Unionville train station (1871) is on Station Lane, off Main Street (old Kennedy Road).

• Newmarket station (1904) is on Davis Drive, east of Main Street.

• Aurora Station (1853) is on the south side of Wellington Street east of Yonge Street.

• Maple Station (1903) is on Hill Street north of Major MacKenzie Drive.

about the historical and actual nature of towns across Ontario is an aspect of Mr. Brown's profession he has made part of his persona.

"If there's something you want to know about Ontario, Ron can tell you about it," said Ms Waldo. "He knows Ontario like the back of his hand."

Irish accent a bit off

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The story is told by the young man, Gabe, in flashback style and, as narrated by Joe Mantegna, is soaked in the blood of vendettas, deals gone wrong, territorial wars between mobs and killings left, right and centre.

The main conflict, though, centres on the fact Gabe realizes he doesn't have the required ruthlessness for the task of carrying on the gangster tradition. In fact, he wants a job in advertising.

I don't know if it's because it was abridged for the audio book, but there isn't nearly enough information about the early days of the mob boss — which was the most interesting part of the story for me — and too much information about Gabe and his discovery that he wants to go straight.

That's the trouble with abridged books, in print or audio form.

There is only one other minor quibble — Joe Mantegna's handling of the voice of one of the characters who, I think, is supposed to be as Irish as Galway Bay.

Mantegna's accent, however, makes him sound like a Cockney reject from Oliver Twist or My Fair Lady.

Still, there's much more that's good about this book than there is bad.

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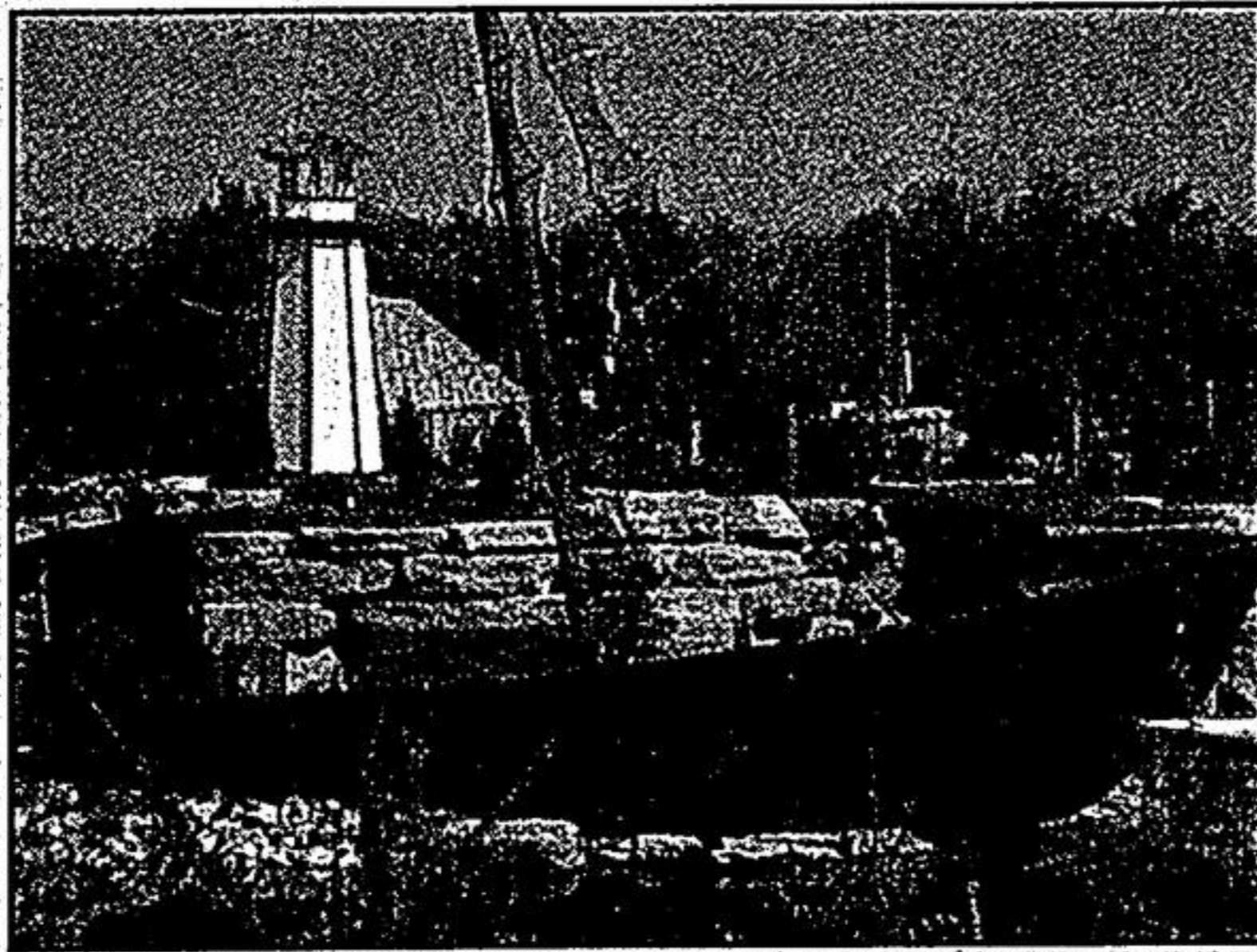
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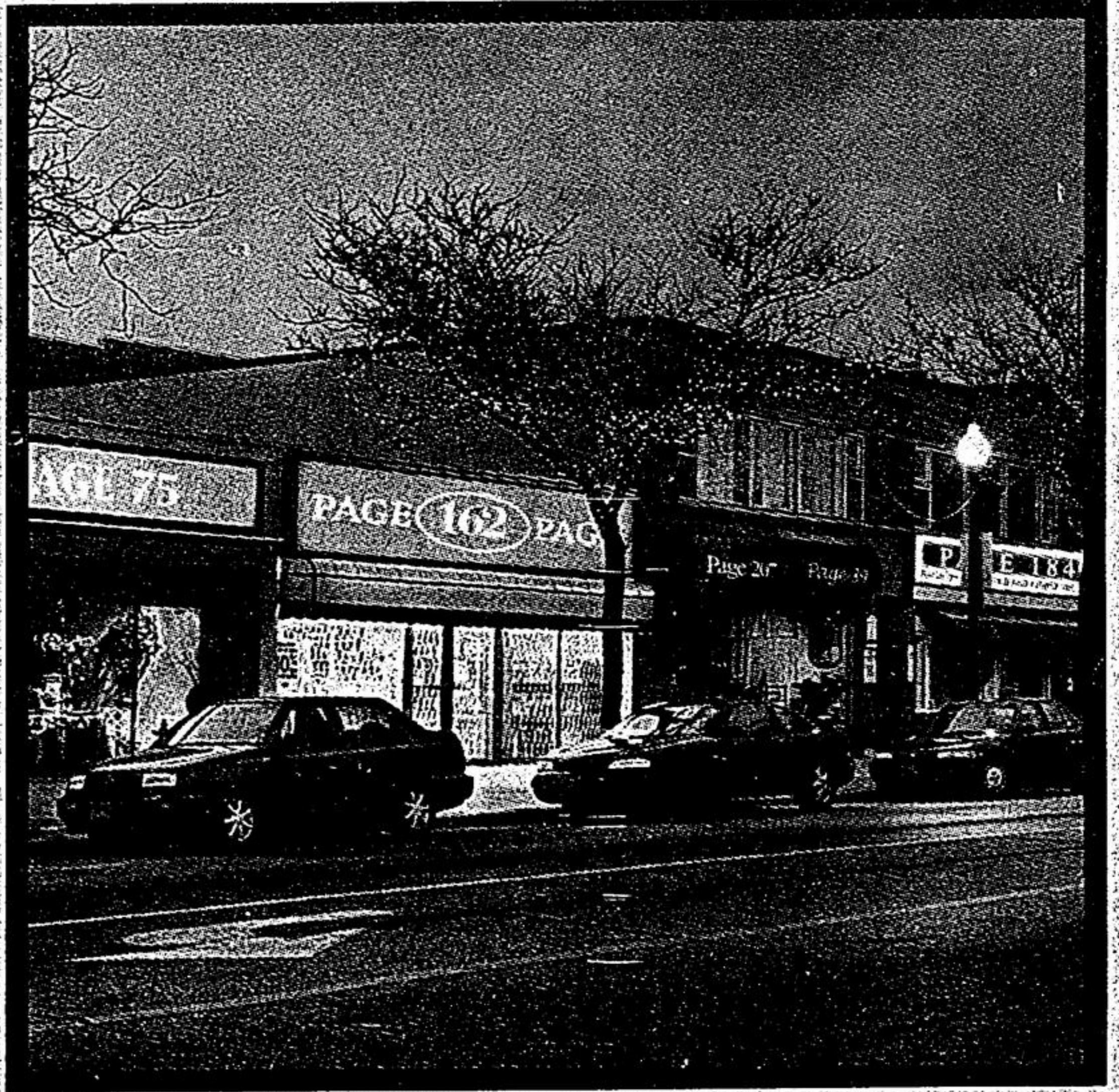


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