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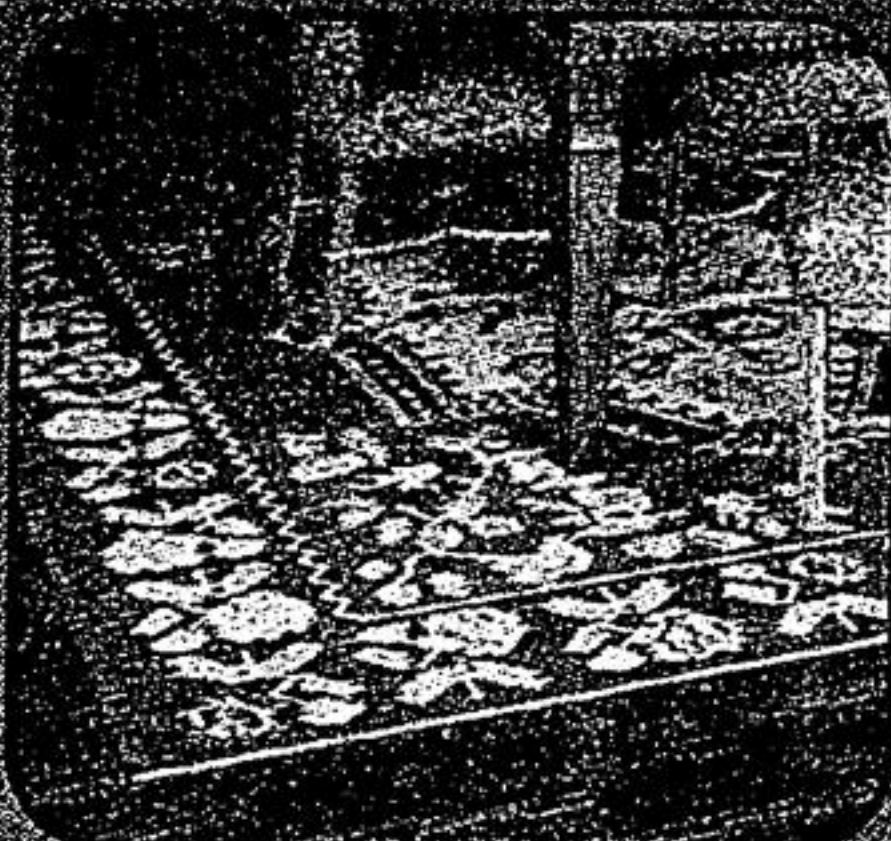
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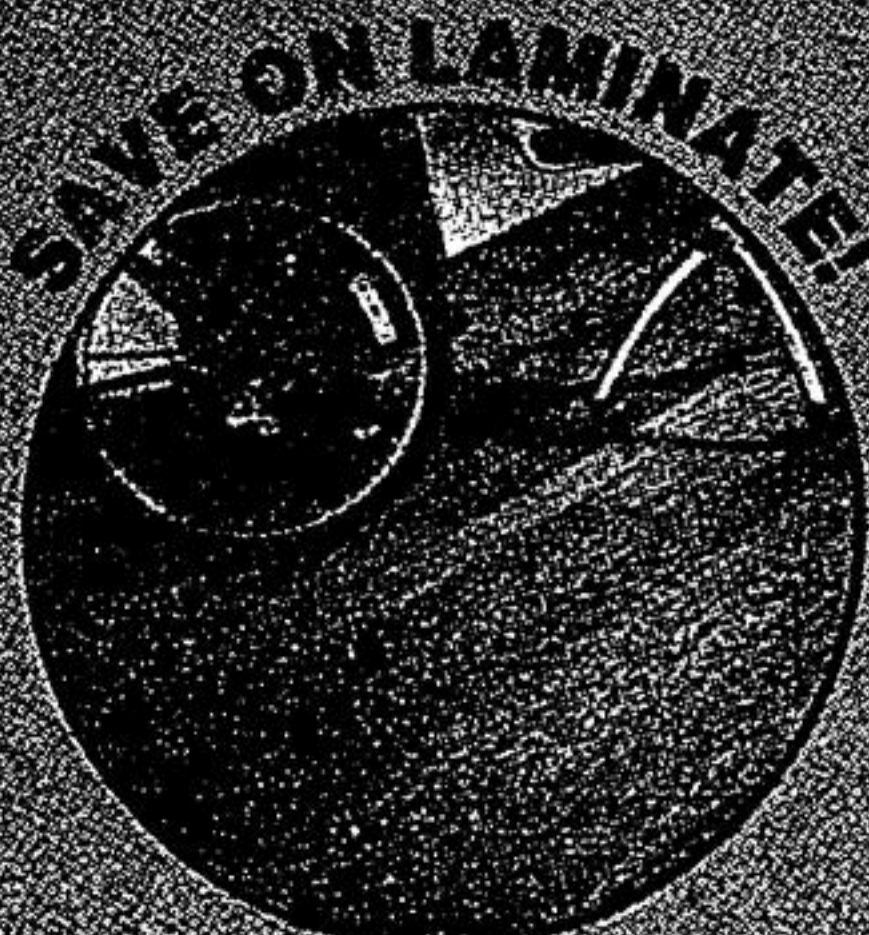
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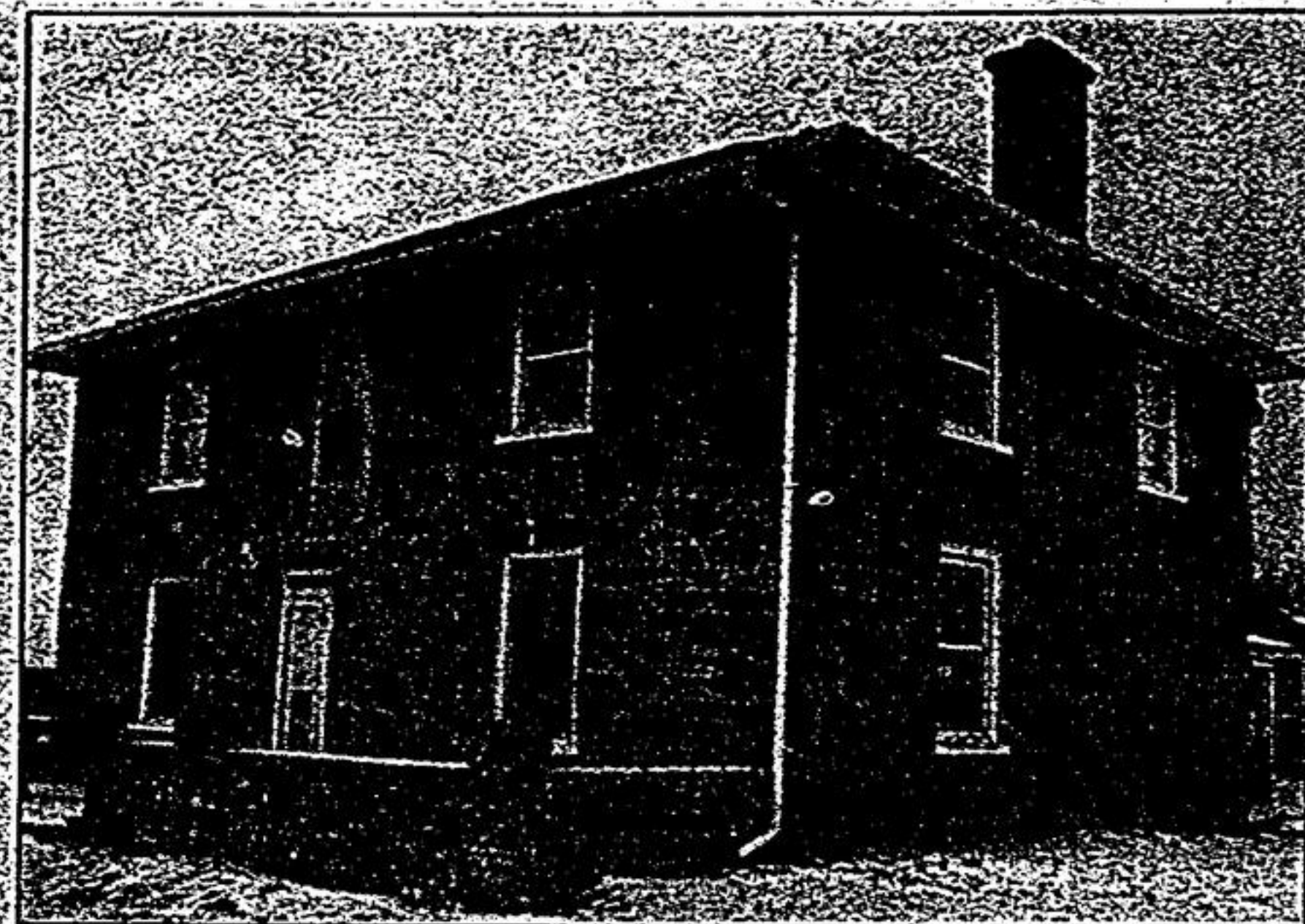
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No one wanted to buy Whitchurch-Stouffville's oldest stone house for \$1 — plus moving costs. It may yet be saved from demolition. BILL ROBERTS PHOTO

## Oldest stone house wins reprieve

BY JOAN RANSBERRY  
Staff Writer

There's a chance the oldest stone house in Whitchurch-Stouffville could escape the wrecker's ball.

Richard Hayes, executive director of the Catholic Cemeteries-Archdiocese of Toronto, said he will visit Whitchurch-Stouffville and personally check out the 131-year-old, two-storey house at Davis Drive and Woodbine Avenue.

The house sits on lands designated for a 402-acre cemetery to be built by the archdiocese. The cemetery will help serve the future Catholic community of York Region.

On an invitation issued by Ward 1 Councillor Steve Pliakes, Mr. Hayes said he will visit the vacant house to see if he can incorporate it into the cemetery site plan.

The archdiocese had applied for a demolition permit to have the house destroyed. However, Mr. Hayes said he accepted Mr. Pliakes' invitation.

He agreed to have the status of the house re-examined to see if there is any chance it could be used in the cemetery plan. A cost analysis will be carried out, said Mr. Hayes.

While the house is not suitable as an office for the cemetery, it could be used as a storage facility, said Mr. Hayes.

"We will look at it. One of the main concerns is the future. We don't want it to become an eyesore," he said. "We will be in the community for years to come and cemeteries are heritage in the course of time."

Whitchurch-Stouffville council has tried to save the

house," stressed Mr. Pliakes.

"It's in my ward. Having more than 130 years crumble in a matter of minutes by a demolition crew would be a blow to our heritage. Mr. Hayes has agreed to try to use the house as part of the cemetery plan."

The house was built by Nathaniel Vernon, an English Quaker who settled here in the early 19th century. The home remained in the family for more than 100 years, said Fred Robbins, a member of the Whitchurch-Stouffville Historical Society.

*"Having more than 130 years crumble in a matter of minutes by a demolition crew would be a blow to our heritage."*

— Steve Pliakes, town councillor

The Vernon house is unique, said Wayne Kelly, president of the Whitchurch-Stouffville Heritage Advisory Committee.

"It's a beautiful house. Its architecture is rare," Mr. Kelly said. "Preserving the town's heritage becomes even more important as the community grows."

Whitchurch-Stouffville council has asked the province to designate the house a heritage property under the Heritage Act.

If it becomes a heritage property, it will be protected from the wrecker's ball for at least 210 more days, giving town staff, council and the local heritage committee more time to try and save it.

A year ago, the archdiocese offered to sell it for \$1 subject to its relocation. Moving it would cost about \$100,000. There were no takers.

## HUGE AUCTION SALE!

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