



The NEW BERN

MINOR

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Yesterday was when, several times a year, someone here in the Coast Country would barge into Fuller's Music House with a cheaply made, inexpensive fiddle.

Always it was the same. Visualizing a fortune, the excited individual felt sure that in his firm grasp he held a rare Stradivarius violin. Minutes later, the instrument's owner departed, deeply disappointed.

What fooled these residents of the Coast Country, and a lot of other folks throughout America who had the same experience, was a printed label inside such imitations that read "Antonius Stradivarius Cremonensis Faciat, Anno 1730." Or maybe 1725, 1731, or another year of the period.

Unfortunately, these reproductions, numbered in the thousands, were worth little. The hoax was finally halted approximately a half century ago, when the Federal government passed legislation requiring the word COPY on all such labels.

Hence, if the label in your particular fiddle doesn't include this word, you at least have the consolation of knowing that the violin in your possession is probably 50 or more years old.

According to experts, you have very little chance of finding an honest to goodness Stradivarius violin. There are between 300 and 400 of the famed musical instruments in existence.

Most of them are catalogued, we are told, and they all bear nicknames. If through some miraculous act of fate you do find the genuine article, you will indeed get more pocket money for it than you can conveniently tote.

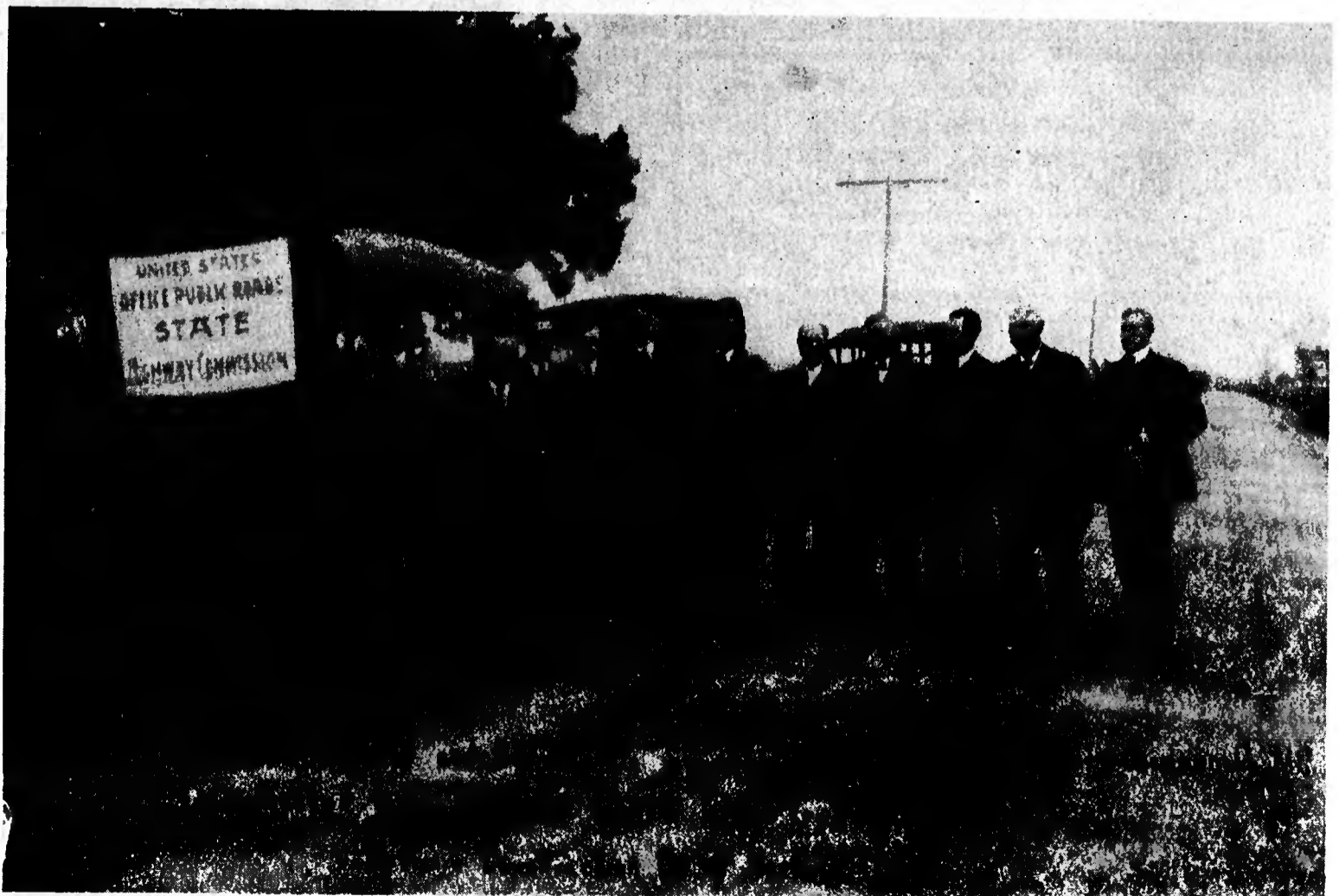
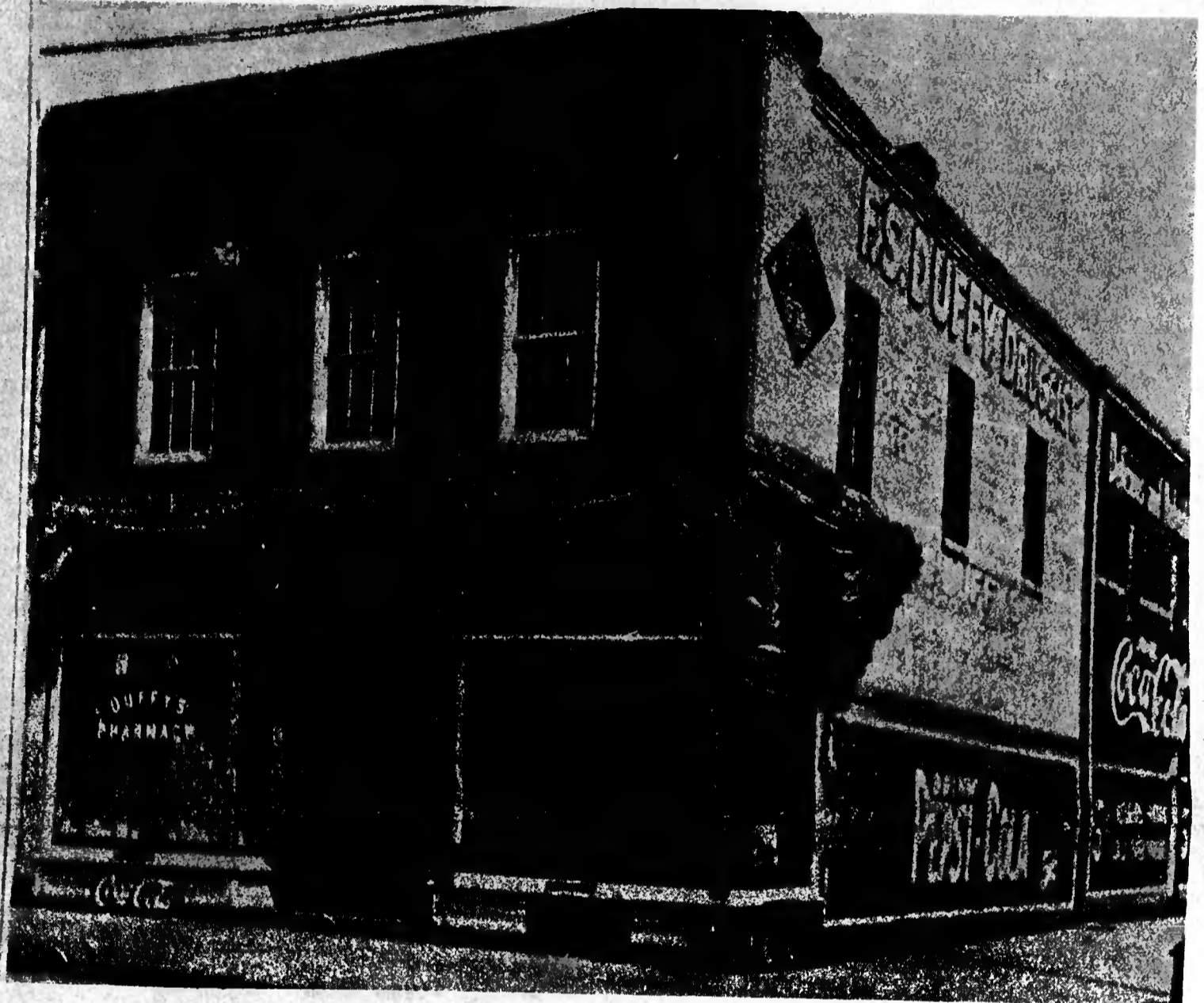
Violins, as we know them today, were perfected in Italy in the latter half of the 16th century. Born in a little town named Cremona, near Venice, Antonio Stradivari made a superb contribution to the art of fiddle making by fashioned with extreme delicacy the curves and arches of the violin body, while keeping the instrument strong and resonant.

Stradivari didn't roam afar to find the wood for his violins. He selected a certain type of pine that grew on the hillsides just outside his home town. He tried every available oil and finish until he came up with a varnish that gave his instruments a rich amber color.

Science, despite great strides made in the centuries since, has never been able to duplicate this varnish, or even approach its incomparable beauty. The secret went with Antonio to his grave, or else was soon lost by those with whom he had worked.

So conscientious was this gentle craftsman that in his old age, when his eyesight was failing, he refused to permit his name to be affixed to the instruments he was still creating.

A few of them, at least, may have been just as close to perfection as the violins he had made from boyhood on, but he was fearful that some minor



LET YOUR FANCY ROLL BACK YEARS
LIKE A BRISK NOVEMBER BREEZE,
AND AMONG THE SCATTERED MEMORIES
YOU'LL FIND SCENES SUCH AS THESE.
—Photos from Albert D. Brooks Collection.

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