

# Island Lake's true spirit now just a reflection in the water

Once I read a poem about aging. Poignantly, it told of a young person trapped in an old body that no longer co-operates with its youthful spirit. It painfully told of the outward changes that no longer reflected the person within and the roads in life they had travelled. Sometimes when I research places within our rural

roots that no longer exist, or that have changed so dramatically that in one sense they have disappeared, I think of that poem. I long to see these places as they once were in their more green and pastoral days all those years ago.

Of this little lake? Even more interesting was that a gentleman by the name of Jack Epworth built a tiny cottage on it. Unfortunately, nature reclaimed the little isle, so the closest we will come to seeing it will be in the few remaining pictures.

One such place is Island Lake located at Aurora Road and the Durham Road 30 split between Whitchurch-Stouffville and Durham. What appears today as a small lake tucked in the turn of the road with a scattering of estate homes is a community that has gone through many transitions throughout the years.

This 14-acre kettle lake attracted many farmers with its excellent land. The plentiful hardwood provided farming families with firewood, while the lake in winter provided the ice for refrigeration.

As with Ballantrae and Lincolnville, Island Lake also supplied 100-foot masts for ships which were then taken to Lake Ontario.

Did you know that there was even once a one-acre island in the middle

By 1861, there was a sawmill owned by Frederick Johnson oper-



Rural Route Ruth

Ruth LeBlanc

ating on the northwest corner of the lake.

Again, like many of the smaller rural communities, Island Lake relied on larger villages for post office, general stores and schools.

When the turn of the century came, so did the locals and tourists. In its serene setting this little lake drew many people up to enjoy a variety of recreational activities.

In summer the people came to enjoy swimming and fishing while in winters you would have seen skaters dotting the lake.

By this time cottages were built around the lake. There was also a public beach and park with a food booth up until the mid 1900's. A trailer park stood for 25 years where the Tokai plant now stands.

The lake is now private and not open for public use. In 1985, when a developer started building estate homes, the era of the little recreation lake ended for the public.

This little lake has gone from a farming community to a recreation spot to its present status as a residential estate community. The island may have disappeared but the sense of community lives on today.

Take a drive by on any summers day and you will see people enjoying the land and water just like our forefathers have for so many years. The land is still lush and the water inviting. In many outwardly ways - just like people - over the years it has indeed changed and shows little of the many roads it has taken in the past.

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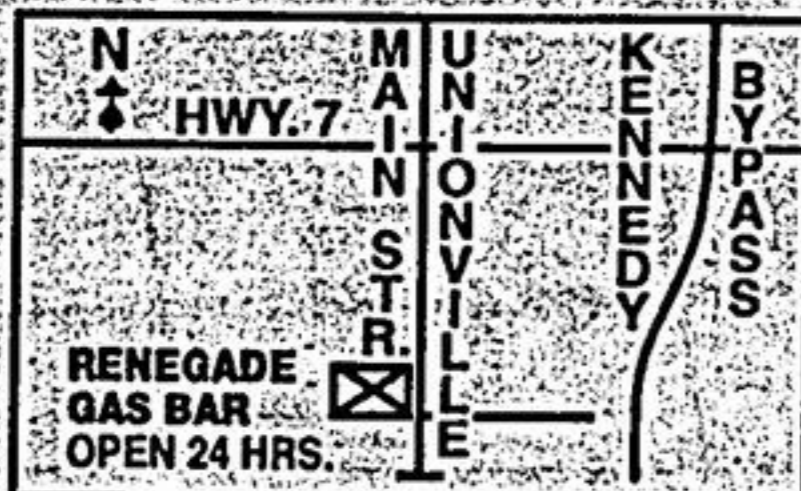
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