



# **The Appleton Wetland; Its Decline, Cause and Recommended Action**

## **Appendix J: The Vanishing Island**

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## The Vanishing Island

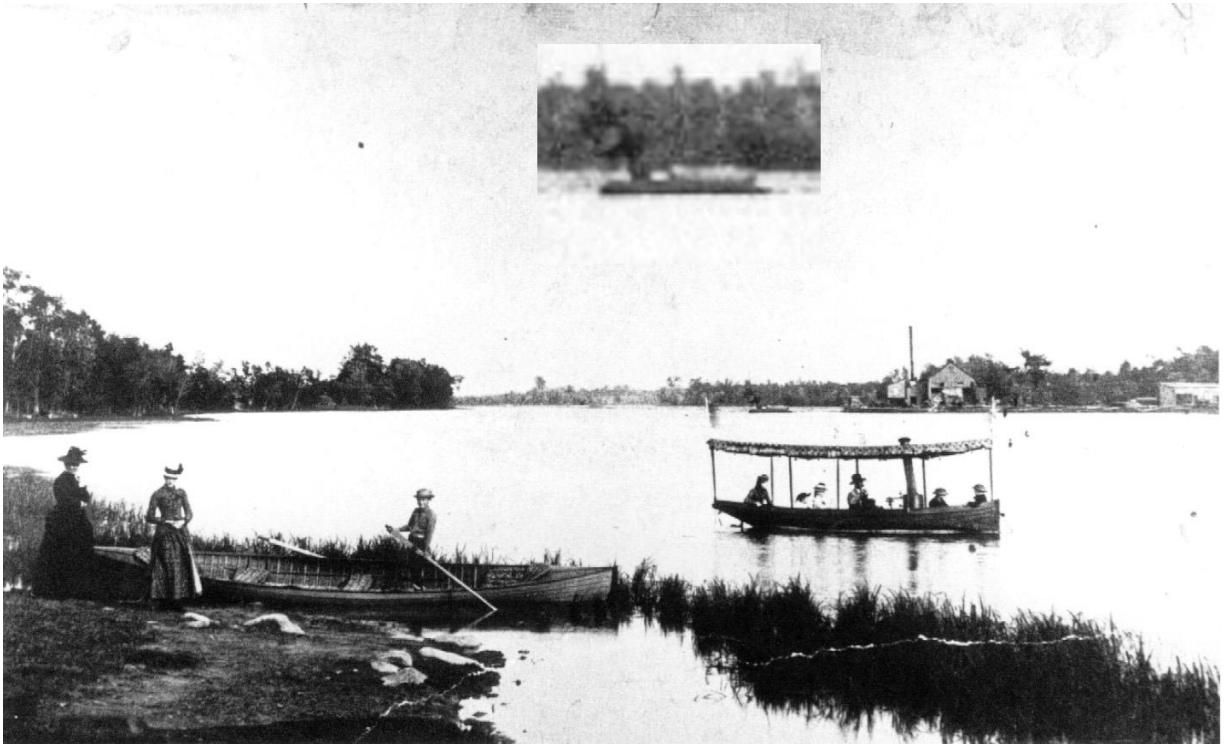
There is a strong memory, on the part of many people, of a small island just above the Fair Grounds in Almonte. This island always disappeared in the spring flood, but then later in the low-flow summer period it was usually quite visible up until around the year 2000. This was particularly noticeable while driving southeast on Martin Street South and approaching St. Paul Street where there is a clear view of the river. The small island was straight ahead down Martin Street as shown on the Google Earth image below. The yellow line projected from Martin Street does point directly at the island.



**Figure J-1 Google Earth view of Martin Street South and island**

Unfortunately, there do not appear to be any available pictures of the island in its summer state during the Flour Mill Era, and memories of exactly what years it was visible, or not, are vague. Without question, it was certainly there a good part of most summers in the 1970s, through to the early 1990s.

There is, however, one historical picture from around 1890 that shows Mayor John Drynan's steamer, along with some suitably attired ladies of the period ready for some boating. That image is included below. Although the exact date of the photo is not known, from the tree foliage and the boating activity, it is clearly summer. If you look closely at the image, just above the stern of the steamer a small island with a tree is visible. For greater clarity that portion of the image has been cropped out, and an enlarged copy of the crop is pasted at the top of the original image. A close examination of the shorelines and trees in the original image suggests that the viewpoint for the photograph was on the river bank at the intersection of Martin Street South and St. Paul Street.



**Figure J-2 Mayor "John" Drynan's steamer, circa 1890**

For comparison the image below was taken from the small pavilion at the intersection of Martin Street South and St. Paul Street on August 13, 2013 at 12:29 PM. At the time the river water level was 117.58 masl as measured at 222 Spring Street. Observing the shoreline and foliage, the image does appear to resemble very closely the similar features in the 1890 image. A second image was taken at the same time with a zoom lens, and a cropped section from the island portion of that image has been pasted at the top of the normal image. Just barely visible is a faint outline of just the top of the island. It is indeed the island – further enlargement will show two birds standing on the rock. The difference in the images is that the 2013 image was taken with a water level of 117.58 masl while the 1890 image was probably taken with a water level of 117.20 masl, the level deduced for the 1970 to 1990 era from measurement of the rock ridge adjacent to the island as detailed in Appendix I. The difference in level is at least 35 cm, an amount that would be quite visible.



**Figure J-3 The same river scene in August 13, 2013 (AI-IMG\_0348e2.jpg)**



In conjunction with the program of coordinated water level measurement during the summer of 2013, as described in Appendix H, in addition to the water level measurements at the riverfront of 222 Spring Street, we also took photos of the island from a the same view point on the side yard of that property. The image below is an example of an image at the lowest water level recorded. It was taken on August 25, 2013 at a water level of 117.49 masl measured at Spring Street.



**Figure J-4 The island from 222 Spring Street (AI-IMG\_0396e.jpg)**

In this image the island is quite visible, but it is not as high as it seemed to be from recollections of earlier years in the 1970s to 1990s. The estimate is that the water would have been about 30 cm lower with the result that the island would appear 30 cm higher.

To illustrate the variation in island height a composite photo was created by cropping a sample of the island from a series of seven images taken as the water level varied from lowest to highest in the available images. All photos were taken from the same spot with the same camera and image zoom setting. Aside from changes in lighting and foliage the only significant change between image samples is the water level. The composite image is below.





**Figure J-5 Composite image of the island with seven water levels**

Note that while the island is quite visible at the lowest level recorded (117.490 masl) it is still considerably lower than recollections of the 1970s to 1990s. As the water rises, the island gets smaller until it is almost gone at a level around 117.70 masl, a level that has become common in the summer since the 2000s. At 117.80 masl, the island becomes a handy resting spot for birds that like to wade in the water.

The island tells us that water levels have changed significantly since the Flour Mill Era.