

TORONTO, TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 1939

# Death Of Mrs. Jennie Oster Removes Last Survivor Of Island's Famed Storm

## She Recently Recalled Destruction of Father's Hotel and Narrow Escape of Family

With the death of Mrs. Jennie Oster, 88, of 11 Branstone road, whose funeral took place to-day at St. Michael's Cemetery, there passed the last survivor of one of the most dramatic episodes in the history of Toronto Island.

She narrowly escaped with her life in the destruction of Quinn's Peninsula Hotel, April 23, 1858.

Until a short time ago, Mrs. Oster retained most of her faculties and was not at all reluctant recently to tell of her harrowing experience.

Previous to February, 1853, Toronto had no island. Instead, there was a peninsula of sand and silt unbroken from its emergence from the eastern extremity of Toronto Bay to the western gap. In ten winter days, nature did what governing bodies had been unable to accomplish—open a gap that would end pollution of the harbor and Ashbridge's Bay. From Simcoe's time the peninsula had been a hunter's paradise and a fashionable resort.

### FIGHT FOR LIFE.

"My father, John J. Quinn, conducted an hotel at Richmond and York streets, a building, I think, that is still standing," Mrs. Oster recently related. "The island was becoming such a popular spot he decided to erect an hotel there. April 13, 1858, marked the completion of the building, and an evening celebration was planned for the workmen.

"At nightfall the hotel was only a memory, my mother and my brother and sister, Elizabeth, were fighting for life in the bay. The storm had been threatening and my father decided to postpone the dinner and took the workmen across to the city. The storm broke while he was there. He had taken me along for company on the return. I was about seven years old."

Mr. Quinn fought his way back around the eastern end of the bay. "We found Mother balancing on a board in the churning water with my baby brother in her arms and Elizabeth clinging precariously to her skirts. She seemed to be standing on the only timber left from the hotel, which was disintegrating and shortly disappeared.

## MOTHER NEVER RECOVERED

"Mother never quite recovered, and they had to send me to Rochester friends for a year."

Mrs. Oster's father, Sergt.-Major John Quinn, was for many years connected with the 10th Royal Grenadiers, and was in charge of stores at the old Fort, where the family occupied one of the brick quarters, still standing. Here Mrs. Oster lived and was married. Sgt.-Major Quinn also was superintendent of the militia rifle ranges when they were on the site of the present Exhibition Grounds.

Mrs. Oster could recall the excitement incident to the Fenian raid and the departure of the Queen's Own for Ridgeway. The Red River Expedition in 1870 was another of her memories.

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