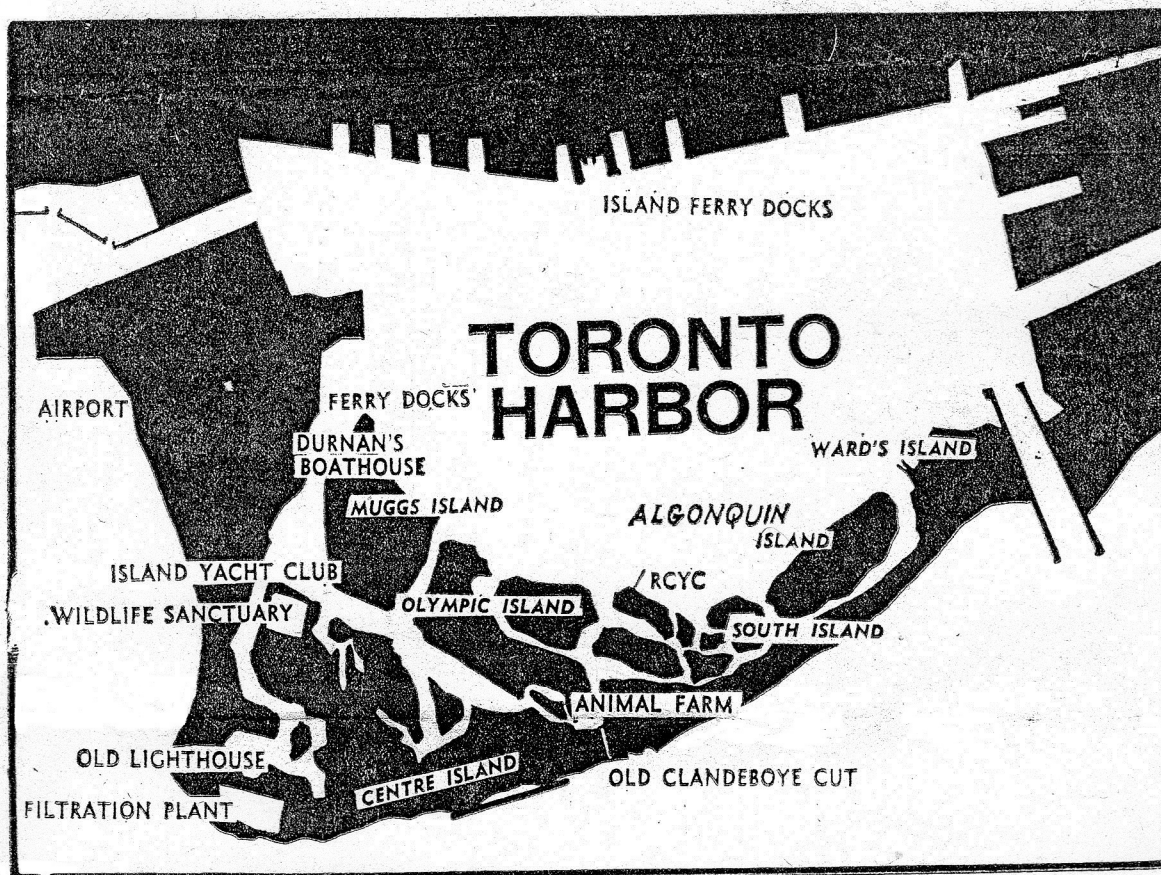


**TOWN & COUNTRY TRIP No. 420****By Harvey Currell**

# Enjoy a rowboat cruise through Toronto islands



You don't have to own a yacht or drive 100 miles from Toronto to enjoy a whole day boat cruise or a half day on the water amid quiet and scenic surroundings.

Just across the bay from Toronto is a network of placid tree-shaded lagoons and an archipelago of 16 islands, big and small. They're made to order for a lazy day's cruise on a thrifty budget.

If you're planning a stay-at-home vacation this year with one-day trips, here's a suggestion for one of the days:

Pack a generous lunch, fill a portable ice chest with cans of soft drinks and take a ferry boat from the foot of Bay st. to Hanlan's Point.

## RENT A BOAT

Find Durnan's boat livery just beside the Hanlan's Point dock and tell John Durnan you want to rent a

boat for a lagoon cruise.

For 80 cents an hour, he'll rent you a big sturdy double-ended rowboat that will seat four safely and comfortably. At that rate, you could spend eight hours exploring the islands for only \$6.40 plus sales tax with no extra charge for lifejackets.

Common sense, of course, dictates that you should be experienced in boating before making such a trip and you shouldn't even consider it if you have small chil-

## Enjoy a rowboat cruise through Toronto islands

dren, under 8 or 10 years old.

John Durnan, whose family has operated a boat livery on the same island location since the 1860s, won't rent a craft to parents with small youngsters.

### TAKE IT EASY

But for responsible people who want to see the islands by water, he has encouragement, advice and well-kept boats.

Once aboard your boat or canoe, I suggest you proceed up the big lagoon on which Durnan's is located. It's called Blockhouse Bay.

Take your time. Row or paddle slowly and land frequently to stretch your legs and sit under the big willow trees which overhang these delightful waterways.

There are picnic tables and washrooms in the park areas beside the larger lagoons and a few refreshment stands.

However your real enjoyment likely won't come in the elaborate park areas and pretentious avenues of the Metro Parks development.

It will be found in the small backwater lagoons and channels where some of the old Toronto island surroundings still exist.

For well over 100 years the islands supported delightfully unique summer and year-round communities.

Most of the houses have been bulldozed by Metro

parks department and the remainder are doomed to go within two years.

### GHOST ISLAND

For your first look at the island past, continue up Blockhouse Bay until it narrows into a lagoon. Follow the right-hand shore and eventually you'll find yourself in Lighthouse pond with Ghost island in the middle.

Here, beside the Metro water pumping plant, floats the once-glamorous paddlewheel ferry Trillium, built in 1910 and still sound of hull and engine but rusting into oblivion.

A short distance away is the hulk of another old island ferry, the Bluebell, converted into a sand barge.

You're just a short distance across a sandspit here from the open lake. Dominating the shore is the fine old stone Gibraltar Point lighthouse, probably the oldest Toronto building still standing on its original location.

Authorized in 1808, the lighthouse was finished in 1815 and continued in active service until recent years. Metro is now preserving it as a historic site.

Also nearby is the island public school which now serves as a nature school for Toronto children.

### REGATTA COURSE

Lighthouse pond is just your introduction to the island lagoons. You'll have to

retrace your course to get out of it. Turn around and follow the right hand-shore, a nature preserve area, until you come to Long pond, a traditional regatta course.

Turn right up Long pond and the main lagoon system will be ahead of you, with humpback bridges, yacht clubs, two churches, graceful yachts and old streets and a few of the Victorian-style island homes that are fast disappearing.

You may not be able to see all you want to in one day. Take your time and plan a return visit. To aid your cruise, you might write to the Toronto Harbor Commission for a Port of Toronto map.

For information on the islands, I suggest you visit the Marine Museum of Upper Canada in the Canadian National Exhibition grounds and see curator Alan Howard.

He grew up on the islands, knows their history and geography intimately and loves to talk about them.

---

*Harvey Currell's 30 Trips Around Ontario is a book that should be in every glove compartment.*

*It was so popular last year that 10,000 copies were sold to Telegram readers in a month. It has been reprinted and is now available.*

*It consists of 120 pages, each trip being accompanied by maps and many illustrations in addition to Mr. Currell's text on what to see along the route.*