

Only Forty Families Remain

By ALBERT WARSON

Three of the 40 families remaining in Centre Island's ghostly community have to be out by March 31, but still have no place to go.

Another small contingent must leave by May 15, the rest of the scattered inhabitants have until June 25. The death knell for the island homes was sounded more than three years ago by Metro Council when it was decided to create an island park and recreation playground.

Centre Island is the first section to fall under the shadow of demolition. Ward's Island and Hanlan's Point will be cleared of residents later.

Last January the 40 families were told by Metro parks officials they would have to move from Centre Island by March 31 to enable crews to clear the ground.

In the face of vigorous opposition by islanders, the officials relented and extended the exodus date to June 25 for most of the 40 families to allow their children to finish the school term without interruption.

However, they stood firm on their work plans and three families, two with children at school, must go next week.

These families were moved out of the Manitou Hotel last December and relocated on the unlucky side of Manitou Rd.—the east side. Buildings from the east side of Manitou Rd. to Hooper Ave. are to be razed beginning March 31.

Mrs. Lawrence Saunders said her husband has failed to find accommodation on the mainland because they have three children, and landlords are not

anxious to rent a house to a family with youngsters, she claimed.

Vicki Poperstone, 15, will have to move with her family next week, although she is in the midst of studies for term examinations at Jarvis Collegiate Institute.

Three of Ronald Lowen's children attend the island public school, but a 14-year-old son is also wrapped up in high school tests.

During a tour of the doomed community yesterday, few persons were seen among the boarded-up houses and businesses that once housed a hardy breed of dweller. A few clothes lines hung with laundry and wisps of smoke from chimneys were practically the only signs of habitation.

Trudging forlornly along a deserted Manitou Rd.—the main street—was Benjamin Oldfield, 75-year-old inhabitant, who first lived on Centre Island in 1896, the last 10 years as a permanent resident.

Although he plans to live with relatives on the mainland, he is still saddened by the demolition of places that are so much a part of his life.

According to a fire captain at the station which serves all the islands, the frame structure will stay at least a year. After that it's anybody's guess, he said.

The wrecking crews move into the section west of Mohawk Ave. to the filtration plant May 15. Buildings east of Mohawk Ave. to Manitou Rd. go after June 25.

A sign over the doorway of Mrs. Stanley Montgomery's home reads Dun Movin, origi-

nally intended as a jest, now a harsh irony. Although the Montgomerys have until May 15 to move, they have not yet found a house for rent and fear they may not find one by the deadline.

Theirs is a typical problem. They have children, which makes it hard to rent a house or apartment; they cannot afford to pay rentals on the mainland for comparable accommodation and there is no room for them in Regent Park housing.

Then there is the other, more basic objection to moving from a home close to nature and the city. Mrs. Gerald Whalen said, "I've been here about four years. What I'll miss most is summertime and swimming in the lake."

Rector of Church of St. Andrew-by-the-Lake, Rev. G. A. Morley said the 75-year-old church would be moved beside a nearby lagoon by Metro crews, but a three-year-old church hall and rector's house would be razed.

Peter Lamantia and his wife have the last business on Centre Island. They have been operating a grocery store for 14 years and expect to run another one in the Metro area after June 25.

"It is too bad, I still do a nice business here and I've got a 10-room house behind the store," he said.

The stillness and creeping destruction on Centre Island emphasize a distinct impression about the place—it is practically dead.