

Barnhart Island Seaway's First Victim

Tragedy is only too often the ingredient in news stories. Sometimes individuals suffer, sometimes towns and cities come under the lash of some natural catastrophe. The series of articles on Barnhart Island, beginning on the local news page today, tells of a different kind of tragedy.

A small community has disappeared from the island. We have every reason to believe that it was once a happy community and we are assured it was a very prosperous one. The labors of its foundation were heroic, as was the case in all the communities in this section of the country which were cut out of deep woods in a generation.

But now the island community is gone and will never come back. The people who lived there were compensated, it is true, but the deeper meaning of the place as a homeland has vanished. The work of the people who built up the island as a home is wasted now.

To a degree the separation of the island from Canada may be blamed, but the place prospered long after that. The actual decline of the island as an agricultural area, with a life and spirit of its own, is due to the St. Lawrence seaway project in one of its earlier manifestations.

Barnhart Island was the victim of a set of special circumstances, which made the case different from that which will apply to shoreline communities on both sides of the river when the project is built. But the empty and time-wrecked homes on Barnhart Island shout the need for more planning in the handling of community problems. Otherwise many of our communities will simply disappear as though they had never existed when the water rises over them.