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Schooner Days MCCVIII (1208)
By C.H.J. Snider

First Wreck at the Western Gap

The *Resolute's* wreck, described in recent numbers about the Queens Wharf and its willow, brought about the grand harbour improvement and water front development which made Toronto one of the greatest ports in the world. The *Resolute* herself was raised, repaired and lived to enjoy this new harbour. Her tragedy of Nov. 21st, 1906, when six of her crew drowned within sight of the Queens Wharf, was this city's last fatal wreck. One cannot forget the *Noronic* holocaust, which still seems impossible but was all too real, Sept. 17, 1949. That, however, was not a shipwreck, nor an Act of God. Loss of the *Resolute* was the last of a long series of disasters for which the inadequate "natural" approach to Toronto harbour was responsible. The earliest of these was the stranding of His Majesty's armed schooner *Anandago*. The name is quoted because so spelled at the time by her youthful commander. It was actually *Onondaga*. She was a vessel of 90 tons burthen and pierced for 12 guns; the flagship of Commodore Jean Baptiste Bouchette of His Majesty's Provincial Marine on Lake Ontario.

Apparently the Commodore was not on board when the stranding occurred. The schooner came over from Niagara to York for Lieutenant Governor John Simcoe, with young Joseph Bouchette in charge. Joseph had completed the survey of York harbour the year before for the Lt. Governor, and was as competent as his father to navigate the *Onondaga*, for he had several commands. But he had no rank yet save that of "aspirant" or cadet. When the schooner stranded in the midnight and the snow, off a totally unlit harbour, "the boy" of course got the blame. The Bouchette's were favourites of Lord Dorchester, the governor general, with whom Simcoe seldom agreed. Jean Baptiste had saved Dorchester's life and career in the American Revolution 18 years before.

Simcoe himself inspected the wreck next day in a small boat, and was soaked with spray and frozen in his wet clothes and far from happy to realize to reach Niagara as he had intended he would have to coast around the west end of Lake Ontario in a row-boat in December – and get back the same way. But Young Joseph with the honor of the Bouchette's, his majesty's ship all at stake, did not despair. With grudging assistance of the Queens Rangers from the Garrison he worked like a Turk to save her with the *Onondaga's* crew largely French. They got all the guns out of her and the spars and the ballast, and hacked away the quickly forming ice, and pumped the freezing water out of her. Still she stuck. All that winter. By Feb. 21st, 1794, they got her off the shoal. She had struck a quarter of a mile south of where the Queens Wharf lighthouse was later erected.

All seemed lost indeed, now, but Joseph stuck to it. New ice formed around the wreck and protected her from wave damage. With the first break-up she floated again, as the water rose, and young Bouchette towed and poled her along into an anchorage in York harbour. This

was in March. He refitted her completely. At the beginning of May he brought her back to the Niagara left in December, with drums beating and colours flying. The Simcoes were impressed. Joseph received a commission as 2nd Lt. in the Provincial Marine as reward, and prospered in the new formed Province of Upper Canada. He is best known for his two excellent "Topographical Surveys."

[Transcribed G.B.M. Sept. 28, 1976.]