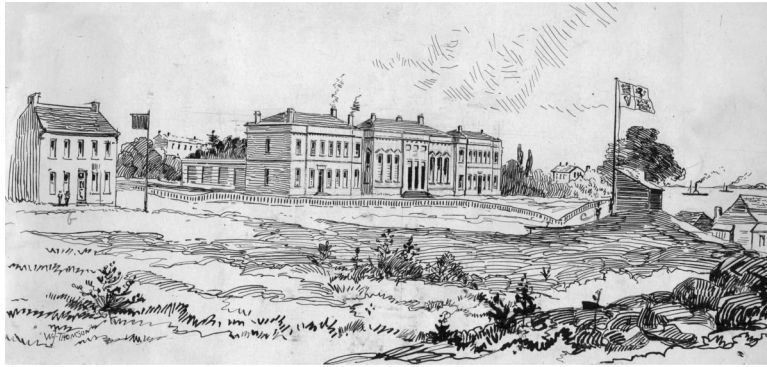


Toronto Telegram, December 24, 1955
Schooner Days MCCLI (1251)
By C. H. J. Snider

GREENLAND FISHERY ON OLD FRONT STREET

“Where?” asks a \$64 tone-of-voice, “was the Greenland Fishery?”



Parliament Buildings, Front Street, Toronto, 1841. Greenland Fishery at left.

It would be easy to pass the ball to Edwin C. Guillet, M.A., those magnificent series of “Pioneer Inns and Taverns” is now in its Vol. II, but it happens that Schooner Days has seen the Fishery in three dimensions, so to speak.

Once in Spitzbergen a few years ago, where Dutch, English and Norwegians had fought a bloody battle over the fishing rights 300 years before and the arctic summer revealed the bones of the victims still scattered on the frozen rocks of Magdalena Bay.

Another time was in Stromness in Orkney, where the Greenland whalers watered for the Arctic annually. We were there two years ago on the trail of John Gow the pirate.

And the third Greenland Fishery was at the northwest corner of Front and John sts. up to this blessed century.

Though we never sang from our bay carriage “Father, dear Father, come home with me now” outside its hospitable door, we knew the Greenland Fishery.

It was a long two-story clapboarded building on the north side of Front. st. with eight upstairs windows looking out on the railway freight sheds and tracks and roundhouses on the old Esplanade. It had three huge brick chimneys, and its extension northward on John st. had a big chimney of its own. These chimneys had served fireplaces large enough for cordwood sticks when the hotel was built in 1825.

Front st., on the high natural bank of the bay shore carried the Garrison traffic from Fort York to church (St. James’) and market (St. Lawrence) and the first Houses of Parliament at the foot of Berkeley st., from the earliest days.

When York became Toronto, Front st. was an “elegant” residential district, with some really fine mansions of red and white brick, and the Parliament Buildings were built on it, just across John st. from The Fishery. So the place did a roaring trade with big-wigs and no wigs.

Even after the imperial troops were withdrawn in 1870 there was still custom from Fort York and the New Fort and Stanley Barracks, and the railway men and the waterfront. Especially when the timber droghers came in the spring to load the winter cut from the north and diminish the great stacks of lumber piled in the North and Northwestern docks, and the Grand Trunk and Northern elevators began to pour their golden hoards of wheat into the holds of newly arrived schooners.



Greenland Fishery Tavern, Front St. W., northwest corner of John Street, Toronto. Drawn by Frederic Victor Poole, 1912

The early railway offices built at Front and Brock streets also added custom to the Fishery, especially as immigration increased.

The “DUKE OF CAMBRIDGE” was another swinging sign, blue letters on a buff ground, a little farther west along Front. st. It intercepted some of the garrison, railway and waterfront trade, for soldiering, railroading and sailing were all great thirst producers.

Next week if God spares us we'll tell how the fishery got its name.