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Schooner Days, LIII (53b)
by C.H.J. Snider

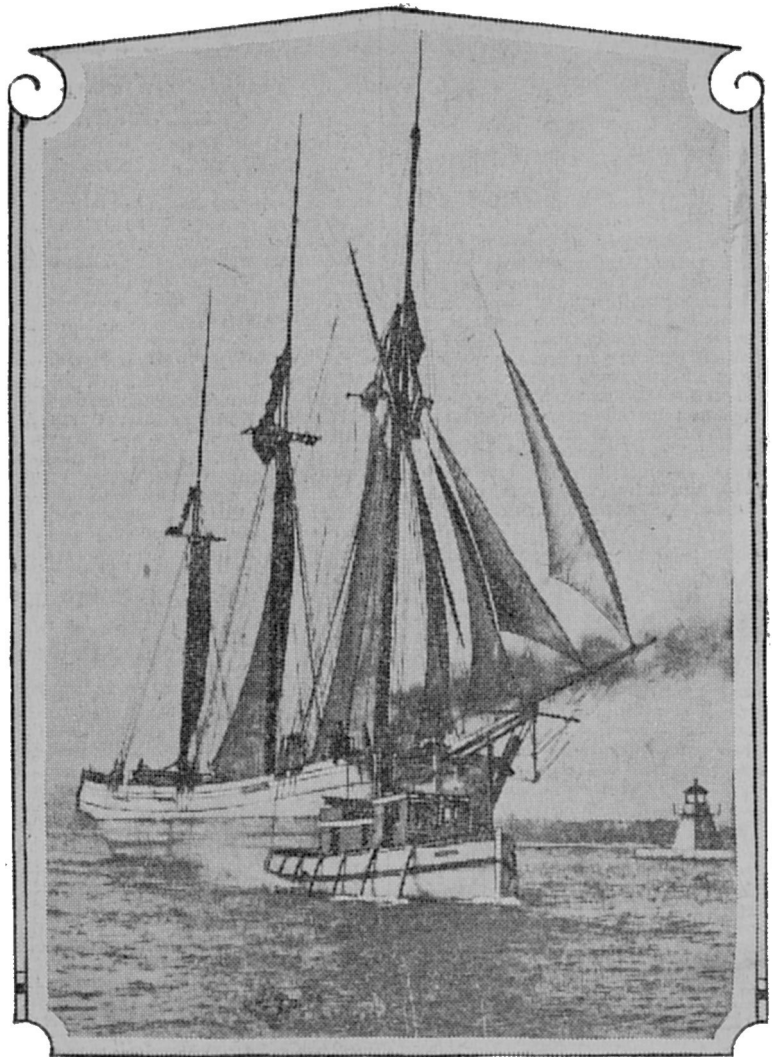
[Note: this article repeats the use of LIII (53) used the previous week, June 25, 1932.]

Sturdy Old ARTHUR

Capt. James Peacock, of Port Hope, lake mariner since 1867, when he went cook in the little schooner Advance, is still sound as a bell. To The Telegram the other day he mentioned two more instances of lake vessels going overseas, and doing well at it; one of them quite in "modern times," too.

WHEN this chronicler was a gawky youngster going to the Old Grammar School on Jarvis street, the schooner *Arthur* of Toledo, used to come in from Cleveland with cut stone for what was commonly known as the "New Court House" and blossomed into the present City Hall.

This was in 1892, and the *Arthur* of that year remains a very definite mental picture. She lay at Brown and Love's wharf, at the foot of the street, very hot and shining in new black paint. On her stern, in white block letters was her name, "Arthur of Toledo," repeated, without the hailing port, on her quarters. She had iron stanchions, supporting a chain man-rope, all around, those quarters. Her captain carried his family with him. One of them, a knee panted youth like the Old Grammar School boy, was the envy of the latter for his opportunities of seagoing and visiting foreign parts and ports. He took it for granted that this was the "Arthur" for whom the schooner was named.



The Arthur, towing out from Toronto, 1908.

Other details are also crisp. She had double topsail yards on the foremast. Her jibboom

was still topped up, like another little mast, for she had towed through the Welland Canal, and all the schooners used to pull in their horns for that ordeal. Her deck was covered with neat pink blocks of sawn sandstone. They have since blackened to a dismal brown with forty years of city smoke and civic hot air.

This *Arthur* of Toledo came no more to the Toronto waterfront after the cut stone trade was ended, when the Parliament Buildings and City Hall and Forester's Building were finished. Indeed it was on into the present century before she again appeared, in new guise; white, now, with leadcolor bottom, no quarter stanchions, no double topsail yards (though she still spread a raffee) and no knickerbockered captain's son to stir the envy of the grown up Grammarian. She had been bought by the Elias Rogers Co. to replace their smaller schooners, the *Keewatin* and *E. J. Rutherford*. They were no longer profitable in days of rising wages and falling freights.

For some years Capt. Charlie Wakeley, of Port Hope, sailed the *Arthur* out of Toronto for the Elias Rogers Co. in sturdy rivalry with his brother, Capt. William Wakeley, who sailed the *Stuart H. Dunn* for the Conger Coal Co. The two brothers continued their association when Congers bought the steam barge *A. Weston* in 1910, renamed her the *Congercoal*, and put Will Wakeley in her. The *Dunn* and the *Arthur* struck their topmasts, and the *Congercoal* towed them both, the one for her own firm, the other for the Rogers Company.

Later on the *Arthur* was bought by Capt. James Peacock, of Port Hope, and blossomed forth again in topsails and raffee and a coat of green paint above and red below. She was the last of the sailing carriers trading to Toronto, where the wharves used to be lined three deep with schooners every time the wind came from the eastward.

No grass grew on the *Arthur's* bottom while Capt Jim Peacock, or his son Capt Bill, were in her, you may be sure. Capt Jim came up from the cook's galley of the *Advance* to the owner's stateroom in the *Arthur* by nothing but sheer grit and hard work, and his ship and his son always shared that. They did well with the *Arthur*, although the lake trade for schooners was fading over the horizon.

With the war came the great chance for lake owners to get out of the old wooden bottoms. A dozen or more of the old-timers – good vessels fifty years before but too small now for profit – were sold "to salt water," the *Arthur* among them. They went down the river two and three abreast, for the demand for tonnage of any size was insistive. It is common belief that none of them ever reached the sea, but that is wrong. It is true some of them could not stand the shaking up their old bones got in the Gulf of St. Lawrence but it took a hurricane to finish off the *Cora A.* in the Gulf of Mexico, years after she left the lakes, the *Alice* got to Florida, the *Sephie* became a barquentine in England, and the *George Sturgis* traded for some time on the Atlantic coast.

The *Arthur* was not the least adventurous of the lot, nor the least successful, although she was forty years old when the war broke out, and forty-three when she finally sailed for the salt.

Capt. Peacock sold her to a Toronto lumber company for a good cash figure, and agreed

to deliver her in Quebec or somewhere on the St. Lawrence. Her new owners got a charter for a coal cargo down, and he sailed to Fairhaven and loaded. In the St. Lawrence River he took a tug for the canals and rapids. In the current above Morrisburg Mr. Tug broke down, and the *Arthur* struck between two rocky islands and ran hard aground.

This is popularly believed to have been the end of her, as happened to some of the other salt-bound lakers during war time.

Not so.

The *Arthur* lay for a week in her rocky bed, loaded deep but not leaking a drop. At the end of that time she was lightened and towed off and taken to Sorel. After discharging her cargo, she was bought by an enterprising "foreigner," as Capt. Peacock relates, and was put on the drydock and equipped with a propeller and a gasoline engine was installed in her cabin. Her three-masted schooner rig was retained.

So outfitted, and armed against the perils of currents and calms, in approaching tide-washed shores, the *Arthur* sailed to Halifax and there loaded lumber for South Africa, if you please! Capt. Peacock says that she made three round trips to his knowledge, and may be going yet; a remarkable tribute to the sturdy workmanship of her lake builders forty years before.

Toledo was a great place for straight grained white oak. There are still many specimens of these noble trees in the city streets. This gave the *Arthur* "a good foundation." She was rebuilt in workmanlike manner later at Manitowoc. And Muir Brothers' dry dock at Port Dalhousie gave her a good overhaul in 1907. She had steel arches in her, which are a great help to the longevity of a wooden schooner's backbone.

Next week we shall have another instance from Capt. Peacock of a lake schooner crossing the equator.