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Wrecked at Oswego was the fate of many - How the ALBACORE went

How often has Schooner Days had to end the story of a stout laker with the notation "Wrecked at Oswego!" That was the end or experience of dozens of old lakers, One recalls naturally enough, the first vessel he sailed in, the *ALBACORE* which was wrecked at Oswego in 1900. She ran the *FRED L. WELLS* and the *T.R. MERRITT* a close race for the distinction of being the last sailing vessel wrecked there, and won it, The *MERRITT* struck, rolled over and came in on her beams end some miles above the harbour, in the same gale, Young Capt, Charley Redfearn, now long retired from his last command the big Canadian National carferry *ONTARIO*, was sailing the *ALBACORE* at the time, Before midnight the mate called him from his watch below, and said it was blowing pretty hard, and he thought he had better get the mainsail in, for it was a very heavy sail to handle, When Capt. Redfearn had turned in it was a light moderate evening and quiet, though the glass was low. We were in for a backlash of the hurricane that destroyed the City of Galveston.

They put the crotchtackle on the mainboom and got the sail down between the lazyjacks with great difficulty, but that was not sufficient relief, The *ALBACORE* flying light, was tearing off 12 knots and the remaining sails threatened to leave the boltropes, so they ran down the outer jib and started to settle the foresail, Captain Redfearn took the halliards, which was a two man job. She was rolling hard now, and in one surge the throat halliards jumped the thumbcleat and took Captain Redfearn aloft with them, burning the skin of his wrists and forearms. It was as though he had been flayed alive, but in spite of these terrible burns he saved his men from death under the decending gaff. The foresail was badly torn before they got it stowed on the boom, Then the forestaysail blew clean out of the bellropes, The new standing jib was the only sail left. It held and saved the ship from losing steerage and broaching to. By this time the lights of Oswego whither the *ALBACORE* was bound, were shining up ahead, and in a few minutes the schooner was racing past the end of the outer breakwater. Steam went up in the donkey boiler, and she blew for a tug. The big harbour tug was away with a tow, but the late "Hunky," Scott came down from inside with the little harbour tug he had, and as the *ALBACORE* rounded up he caught her line and tried to drag her into port across the wind and against the river current, It was an anxious moment, with safety a few hundred yards ahead and destruction gnashing its teeth a few hundred yards to leeward, the *ALBACORE* still rolling wildly from the confused sea, but gaining a little smother water with each fathom, She sagged off to leeward, taking the tug with her, Hunky Scott remembered what had happened to the Oswego tug that had tried to save the *FLORA EMMA*, in off that same lee shore. She got into shoal water-herself, bumped the bottom, burst a steampipe, lost the schooner and went ashore herself, a complete wreck, with her Captain drowned and the vessel she had tried to save smashed to as many pieces as the cargo of lumber she had on deck.

Perhaps another 10 minutes of trying would have gotten the *ALBACORE* in, perhaps it would have to put both tug and schooner on the beach. The tugman would not take the chance. He out the axe to the towline, Captain Redfearn was not surprised or bitter when the *ALBACORE* blew sideways across the tugs stern lantern and raced for the beach under For Ontario. He was is burned up already by the frightful rope burns on his arms that he has no indignation left. He

knew Hunky had used his best judgement, and that was that. He called to the crew to hang onto windward, so as to be clear of falling spars, and the next moment the *ALBACORE* crashed into the boulders. Her blocky bow came down with one hard crash, and she slewed around sideways. Her jibboom was pretty well over the beach when the racing waves struck back in the dragging under—tow. IAIhen the seas broke she seemed hundreds of yards out. She came in almost of the Oswego Life—saving Stations doorstep. In next to no time the lifesavers had shot a line with their rocket gun. It was made fast to the foremast and the breeches buoy was hauled out. The woman cook was first to be saved, Captain Redfearn, the flayed arms and all, the last. He was rushed to Oswego Hospital, treated for burns and shock and kept all night. Next Morning, bandages and discharged, he left the hospital. First man he saw on the windswept street was the bearded Captain Dolph Corson, of the *T. R. MERRITT*. Hello Capt. where's your ship? asked the whiskered one of the beardless boy. On the beach, said Captain Redfearn ruefully. s mine said dolph ruefully. The schooner *T. R. MERRITT* was the finest ship he had ever had. She was a hopeless wreck 5 miles to the westward. The *ALBACORE'S* experience was an example of what happened to dozens of ships, both Canadian and American, at the mouth of Oswego harbour, others besides all those mentioned were the *BALTIC*, *DANIEL G. FORT* Canadian and American losses on successive nights in 18916 *CAROLINE MARSH*, from Port Hope, lost in 1891; *SNOW BIRD* and *WOOD DUCK*, both ashore the same day in 1880, and both got off this time but perished later; the *F. E. TRANCHEMONTAGNE*, *D. M. FOSTER*, and the *TWO BROTHERS* of Port Hope, which came to grief on the breakwater. The *LOCHIEL* was struck by a heavy sea at the harbour entrance and had her cabin trunk stove in, her binnacle washed overboard and one man killed by the jibbing of the boom. The *JESSIE DRUMMOND* had a similar experience once, her woman cook being almost drowned in a flooded cabin.

The *B. W. FOLGER* and the *TRANCHEMONTAGNE* are reputed to have jumped the pier like steeplechasers, but this does not seem to be authenticated. At any rate it was not the case when they were lost. Their deaths were 20 years apart. When the *TRANCHEMONTAGNE* struck the pierhead and sank, her crew taking to the rigging. Ed Cook of Milford was washed overboard and grasped one of the deck boxes for provisions or gear, which had been jolted loose. On it he was thrown overthe breakwater in to the Harbour by the following sea as it burst, which gave rise to the South Bay legend in Prince Edward County that Ed Cook road the Oswego breakwater on his trunk. Sailors seldom took sea chests with them in lake schooners, usually carrying their belongings in a bag called a turkey. There was no room for chests in the lake forecastle and little enough in the cabin. The difficulty was in getting them down the scuttle, which was made small to keep out the water.

The *E FOLGER* recovered from whatever experience she had at Oswego and lived to really ride the pier at Great Sodus. She was light, drawing feet with her centre—board up, and jumped clear over the pier— head in a big sea. She was ultimately burned at Kingston.

(Caption) Her back broken on Oswego's boulder shoals, the BALTIC of Wellington Square watches the close reefed CLARA YOU ELL making the harbour entrance — December, .

(Caption) SNOW BIRD and WOOD DUCK, both Canadian schooners, on the snowy beach at Oswego after the Great Gale of Nov. 6 —7, 1880.