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By C. H. J. SNIDER

HARRY OUT OF PICTON HAS A SHOWDOWN

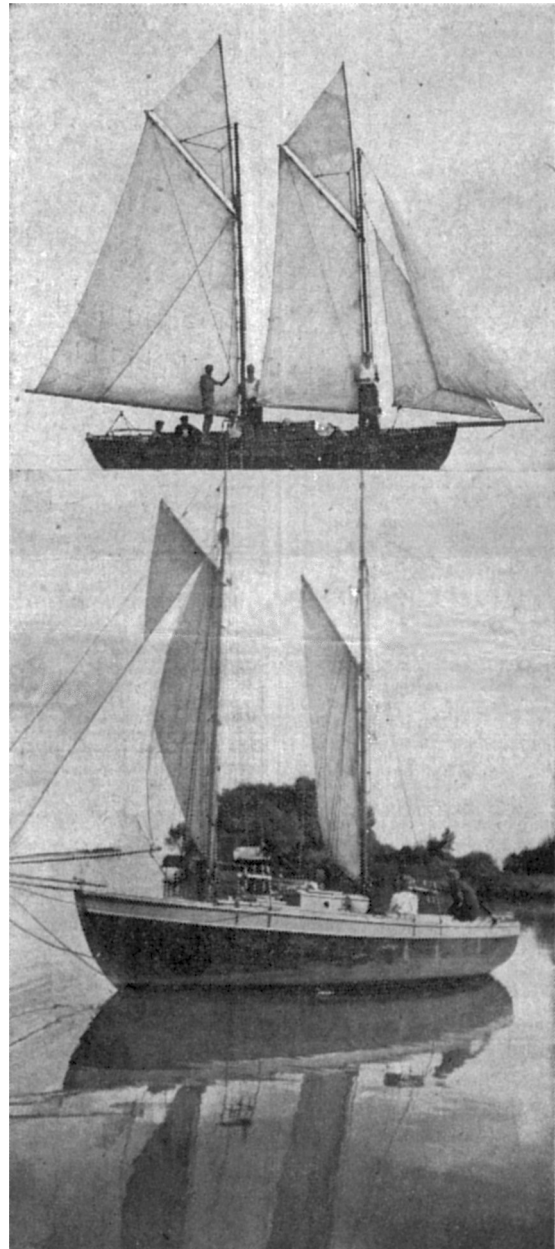
WHEN he joined the barquentine *George Thurston*, of Kingston, at Windsor, sixty years ago, Harry McConnell, of Picton, was the only Canadian aboard, except the captain, John Gordon. The mates were American and the forecabin was filled with American sailors from Detroit. They resented Harry's presence because they had bunkies who wanted the job.

Harry had all the hard climbing to do, and there was lots of that, the *Thurston* being square rigged forward, but he was good at it and preferred to go aloft alone, so that he would not be crowded off the yard or kicked in his face by someone on ratlines above him. The crowd were poor climbers and the only help he got was once from the mate in furling the topgallant sail in very rough weather, with the vessel jumping her whiskers out in the seaway.

The captain kept an eye on him but said nothing.

LOADING CARGO FOR CHICAGO

Loading ties and posts in Big Pike Bay was hard. They finished in Little Pike Bay, which was worse. Primeval wilderness, and the entrance so narrow they had to be towed in by a fish tug, and could only get out when they had the wind right aft. They wended her around, holding her pointed straight for the channel with a 400-foot line over her stern made fast around a tree ashore. It was floated by cedar posts to keep it from catching on the bottom. Harry was sent in the yawl boat to tend the shore line and cast off when ready. Before doing so he bent his yawlboat painter to the big line, and once he cast off the *Thurston*, with square



THIS IS THE "NIGHT HAWK," under full sail and reefed down for a coming squall. Not connected with the "George Thurston," but there is a story coming about her – "Defiance's Grandchild" – next week.

sails set started out through the channel, towing the yawlboat 400 feet astern. Harry couldn't scull as fast as the vessel was sailing, and he couldn't haul himself aboard by the heavy hawser with its load of cedar posts; and the crew couldn't or wouldn't haul him in towards the vessel. He might have run the length of Lake Huron and Lake Michigan in the yawlboat, if the captain had not lowered down and clewed up all sail and brought the *Thurston* to a halt; till the yawl could be brought under the stern and hooked on to the davits.

The ties and posts were unloaded in Chicago, and they went to Marquette to load deals for Saint John, N.B., beautiful clear pine, not a knot in half a million feet of it.

In Lake Huron, during some all-hands call, three of the gang went for "Hank" as they had named him – and worse than that. They thought that he had left his revolver below, the one he had bought in Alpina when he came out of the winter logging camp. He grabbed the first man who made a pass at him and knocked him down, took four front teeth out of the next one's mouth and threw the third one over his head. The first mate came on the run to stop the slaughter. "Come on, you American devils," yelled Harry, "I'll clean you all up!" The mate was stopped in his tracks by Harry's revolver thrust under his nose. He threw up his hands and backed away and the gang slunk in the opposite direction.

THE INQUEST

"What started that, Harry?" asked the captain on the quarterdeck when it came to Harry's trick at the wheel.

"The fellow who has four less teeth called me a s.o.b."

"Always take your own part – if you're able, Harry," said the captain.

It was the rule then as now in sailing ships for sailors to always pass to the leeward of an officer, but after this Harry went out of his way to pass to the windward of the first mate, and the latter, thoroughly cowed, took it like a lamb.

After a stormy passage, outside and on board, they reached Kingston at the foot of Lake Ontario. But the voyage on to Saint John was suddenly interrupted. The crew were told they would be paid off, and all scrambled forward to pack their bags.

"You down there, Harry?" called the captain at the foreshuttle.

"Yes, sir."

"Well, you stay aboard a while."

The others threw their bags up on deck, went aft, got their pay, and over the rail, the two mates following. Only the cook remained. Captain came forward again and called down: "You take your clothes aft, now, Harry. You're mate of this vessel."

THE END OF THE ROAD

The *Thurston* never completed this voyage to Saint John. She was sold some time later,

and Capt. Gordon and Harry parted company. The vessel went back to Georgian Bay, and either she or a namesake, the *David Thurston*, was lost on a rock there in 1882. John Williams knew her well, sailed in her once to Port Dalhousie. And Frank Jackman, the tug captain, now gone, knew her well, too, for he once had to pull her off the old steamboat landing crib outside of Port Credit, where she had gone in to load grain. That's the size of craft that traded to Port Credit in the old days. Her square yards seemed to touch both sides of the creek at once.

Harry and his captain met again when Harry was in the *Mary Lyon*, of Ogdensburg. Capt. Gordon was in the *Jennie Mathews*, her twin and great rival. He told Harry he didn't feel very well at times; he had pains in his head, and the doctors told him his brain was too big. He gave up the *Jennie Mathews*, and went mate in some vessel; and one night in Lake Erie he rushed from his stateroom with a great cry, leapt over the taffrail, and vanished in the wake.

Harry McConnell still lives in Picton, a long spare figure with keen prospector's eyes, his hands a little difficult now in controlling a pen, but as much at home on the spokes of a steering wheel as Paderewski's upon piano keys; and a tenor voice still true and sweet for "The Wreck of *Persia*," "The Loss of the *Antelope*," "The Cruise of the *Bigler*" and all the old lake chanties. He is almost eighty-five. His grandfather Munro, his mother's father, fought at Beaver Dams in the War of 1812.

He had just completed rigging a model of the *George Thurston* with all of her seventeen sails set, for the next Mariners Service at Cherry Valley. Only those who have attempted it know how much finger-work is required to bend and set seventeen miniature sails correctly.