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Schooner Days DCXXIX (629)
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DEFIANCE'S GRANDDAUGHTER

"T'OUSAN'S like that on the coast, 'n' Newfound-land, good little boats, too,' said the man from Comee Seldom, in whose idiom thousands meant only plenty.

"We used to have lots of little vessels like that on these lakes," came the answer. "That's a real hooker rig. Forty years ago Frenchman's Bay and West Market street slip and Port Credit were lined with them."

But this was 1943. The little fellow lifted above the horizon fast, a pair of three-cornered gafftopsail, below them foresail and mainsail wide and squarish, of similar size, ahead of these a triangular staysail and outside of that a high clewed flying jib on a pole that could be rigged out or run back on the bowsprit.

In the glasses it looked like the ghost of the *Minnie* of St. Catharines, or the *little Zebra*, or the *Ann Brown* of Toronto, that went a hundred years ago from the foot of York street to Manitoulin to buy furs from the Indians.

Could it be that the days of the little lake traders that used to run apples, cordwood, lumber, grain, scrap iron, and lastly stone, had come back? We had not seen a fore-gafftopsail on Lake Ontario since *Bluenose* went mad ten years ago.

This one was a stepper, and came into view fast, a sturdy black hull with a brown varnished gunwale atop, and her transom deep and narrow like the stern of a Columbian I caravel. But she was very modern, streamlined in fact, flush decked with I a neat square companion hatch. Very much the yacht, and not at all the hooker. But in spite of variant details, the total effect still strongly reminded one of the old rig for little lakers.

We hailed her, and got the answer.

"*NIGHT HAWK*, Ashbridge's Bay Yacht Club."

"A credit to any club," we retorted. "We'd like to visit you."

The Ashbridge's Bay Yacht Club is located on the potentially prettiest bit of sailing water around Toronto – a tree-fringed basin for small boat sailing, a wide but not too wide channel out into the lake and direct approach from the land at Wood-field road. All it needs is a whole-hearted municipal effort to end the sewage nuisance and a small breakwater to protect the channel entrance. Once cleaned up, Ashbridge's Bay would be a finer marine parkway than Humber Bay is now. Even in its present much abused state it possesses great charm.

This was found to be *Night Hawk's* headquarters, and this was her story:

Roland Kirk, 33 Springbank ave., Birch Cliff, owned her. He had been three years building her, working of evenings in a garage at West Hill, half a mile from the railway tracks

and a great deal more from the water. She was launched in 1937. She represented all of his spare time in three years, and it was spare time well employed.

She looked much bigger than her dimensions, but she was “all boat.” Every inch of her yielded the maximum in accommodation. She had no big cabin trunk or skylights to eke out her headroom (and leak) but she had full sitting-up space for all hands under her long strong watertight deck, except, of course, where the cockpit intervened. She had four feet of headroom and it was so well placed, there was room for four bunks, upper and lower, on each side, besides the necessary space for the galley, dining table, lockers and full living equipment.

She steered with a long tiller. A rowlock aft hinted at her auxiliary motive power – a long sculling oar thrust over the stern, very effective for a craft of her size. Stone Hookers ten times her weight used the same handy auxiliary.

Mr. Kirk, a family man, liked to take his family with him in comfort. *Night Hawk* has living accommodation for eight, and it is real accommodation. Yet she is only 27 feet over all, 7 feet three inches beam, and 4 feet draught of water. On similar dimensions, such good little yachts as the C-boats and tumlarens find themselves crowded with four living aboard. The difference is in *Night Hawk*'s great waterline length and available freeboard – Mr. Kirk's idea.

“Her lines were by C. D. Mower,” said he modestly – a well-known American designer, going strong even 40 years ago – “and they were intended for a 24 foot sloop. Magazines always tell you not to alter a design in any particular, but we had to defy that.

“I didn't want a sloop but a schooner, so I had to throw out all of the sail plan, spar plan and rigging plan. Then I didn't want a cabin trunk, but all my headroom under the deck, so I had to carry the hull up. But I didn't want her sticking out of the water like a haystack, so I had to sink her down. This would have brought her transom down below the waterline and made her drag, so I carried out her lines aft, lengthening her by three feet over all. I couldn't afford more than four feet, the original draught, even after sinking her lower in the water, so I cut six inches off the keel.

“Everything turned out fine. She will steer herself, so well is she balanced. She sails well, in light weather and heavy. One man, even a boy, can handle her alone, she is dry as a chip, and she accommodates eight.

“The name? Well, I like the little masthead flag you hoist after sundown for a windfinder, that is nicknamed a nighthawk, and as I am a working man much of my sailing has to be in the evenings. And besides, we worked on her so much at night, and so far into the night, when we were building her in those three years, that my wife used to tease me when she would bring out midnight supper for the nighthawks as she said the neighbors called us.”

“Where did you get the rig?”

“As boys my brother and I spent all our playtime at Balmy Beach, Woodbine Beach and the sandbar cutting off Ashbridge's Bay. We used to watch the schooners and stonehookers go

by. The way they had their sails arranged was fixed in my mind. So, wanting a schooner rig for *Night Hawk*, I drew a sail-plan as I remembered it from the smallest schooners. I knew this was the result of generations of experiment in finding an easily handled, efficient rig. When I satisfied my own eye I reduced the sketch to scale corresponding with the *Night Hawk*'s length on deck. This gave me the position and dimensions of my masts and other spars, and I went ahead. It may have been a rule-of-thumb defiance of naval architecture, but she balances perfectly under all combinations of canvas."

"I like *Night Hawk* for a name, but after all the variation you might have called her *Defiance*. There were two or three *Defiances* among the schooners on the lake."

"Why, yes," admitted Mr. Kirk. "I hadn't thought of that, but my brother, now dead, owned and sailed a hooker called the *Defiance*. Do you know anything of her?"

Answer next month.

(Caption) "Her transom is deep and narrow like the stern of a Columbian caravel."

(Caption) "A sturdy black hull with brown varnished gunwale."

(Caption) "A pair of three-cornered gaff topsails."