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Schooner Days DCLIV (654)
By C.H.J. Snider

QUINTETTE FROM QUINTE WAY

Recall Tragic Wreck and Heroic Rescue of Sixty-four Years Ago by Reunion in Toronto This Week

Believe the camera or not, these five ladies are all intent upon a photograph of their father, not on examining a new crochet-hook or its product, as might appear at first glance. The portrait of their father is shown behind them, inset so neatly that it might be taken for a picture on the wall of the room. The scene is a reunion which The Telegram was happy to witness this week. It recalls a heroic exploit in schooner days which has often been recounted and which will stand telling again, for it reflects great credit on the mild looking gentleman whose daughters, grown up, married, and scattered a thousand miles apart, are all gathered for a Toronto visit.

Consecon, the family home, is not on the Bay of Quinte face of the county, but not far from it. Consecon is near Weller's Bay on the Lake Ontario side. Together for the first time in 34 years, the five daughters of this hero of Lake Ontario's great 1880 gale are happily filling long hours with memories of childhood and girlhood in Prince Edward County. The five, whose ages total about 375 years, are Mrs. Finley Stewart and Mrs. William Nelson, both of 623 Church St., Toronto; Mrs. John Goodmurphy, Belleville; Mrs. Bert Bishop of Winnipeg; Mrs. Horace Alyea, Consecon, Ont. In the same order they are Emma, Amanda, Ida, Edith and Lettie, and their father was William Andrew Young, United Empire Loyalist carpenter and fisherman of Consecon.

He was the first man into a fishing boat which made a gallant attempt to reach the Toronto schooner *Belle Sheridan* as she pounded to pieces on Weller's Beach on Nov. 7, 1880, with loss of her captain, James McSherry; three of his sons, John, Tom and Eddie; the mate, John Hamilton, and cook, Sam Boyd. The fishing boat rescued the only person saved, 17-year-old Jim McSherry, another son of the owner-captain.

Twenty times the improvised lifeboat was launched from the beach, only to be driven back high up the shore by the mountainous seas. Three times it was capsized in the ferocious undertow, and the brave young fellows manning it almost lost their own lives. Trying once more they sighted a black oilskinned figure in the surf clinging to a deck plank. This was Jimmy McSherry, who had leapt overboard after his little brother Eddie had died in his arms and his two other brothers had taken to the rigging. His father had also drowned where he was lashed to a timberhead. When the fishboat neared him he grasped a ringbolt in its stem, and the lifesavers hauled him aboard and rushed to the beach where a thousand people waited. Putting out again they got within thirty yards of the wreck when their boat was again capsized, and they were washed back ashore. By this time the masts had fallen and there was none left, living or dead, aboard the *Belle Sheridan*.

The five daughters of the man who would have given his life to save the rest of the *Belle Sheridan*'s complement have much to remember, proudly, of both their parents. Their mother came from a staunch Prince Edward County family founded by a Welshman. Their father, son of John Young, who came to Ontario from New York State, was honored by the government of Canada – with a \$50 testimonial – for his bravery in the attempted rescue of the men of the *Belle Sheridan*, and soon afterwards was made captain of the Consecon lifeboat.

“If our brother was alive, he would remember more of the big storm,” Mrs. Stewart told The Telegram. “We’re sorry now that we didn’t find out more of what our father did that night, and have some record of it.” This only son of William Andrew Young, Charles John Young, died last Christmastime in Copenhagen, New York.

“I only wish I had my little stool from the *Belle Sheridan*,” exclaimed Mrs. Bishop suddenly. “You remember it?” Her sisters nodded quick-remembering agreement. “I was the youngest, so I was given the stool when it was washed ashore,” Mrs. Bishop explained to The Telegram. “I don’t know how long that was after the wreck, but I know the stool was my particular pride. I wonder what became of it?” Nobody could remember, but the general belief was that it was probably left in the old house at Consecon when it passed into other hands.

The daughters of William Andrew Young could not recall who was with their father in the fishing boat. However, Prince Edward County memories of the great storm that damaged 27 Lake Ontario ships besides the *Belle Sheridan* say his four companions included a young schoolteacher of the district whose name has been forgotten, and Walter Losee, Frank Bonter and Stephen Clark.

Mrs. Young died seven years ago in Toronto at the age of 93 – her mother lived to the day after her ninety-ninth birthday. For the first time together the daughters went this week to their mother’s grave in Mount Pleasant, in united tribute to her memory. Their father, 74 when he died in 1915, is buried near Gardenville at the Carrying Place, on the Bay of Quinte, which got its name from the Indians as a place where they had to portage. Because of distance and the difficulties of wartime travel, the daughters will not be able to visit their father’s resting-place.

But their thoughts have been constantly of him, as of their mother, and they have talked of what the two eldest daughters, Mrs. Stewart and Mrs. Nelson, can remember of that terrible night of 1880, and of what all have been told about it.

“I was away from home the night of the big storm,” Mrs. Stewart told The Telegram, “but well do I remember the presentation in the town hall to my father and the other men of the fishing boat that tried to reach the *Belle Sheridan*. My father was presented with \$25, and I with the other \$25. My mother would have received it if she had been there but she was on a visit elsewhere and I was proud to act for her.”

The second daughter of the house, Mrs. Nelson, can hardly distinguish, after all these years, between her own childhood memories of the big storm and what she was afterwards told of it.

“But I do remember distinctly standing on the shore for a time with many others and watching waves break higher than the masts of the *Belle Sheridan*,” said Mrs. Nelson to The Telegram. “Then, at home afterwards, we were all afraid my father was drowned. We knew he was going out in the boat to try to save them, and afterwards every one told us how he was the first to get into the boat and how unafraid he was in the face of terrible danger.”

(Caption) The five daughters of William Andrew Young, hero of the great storm of 18809, are shown gathered together for the first time in 34 years at the home of Mrs. Finley Stewart, 623 Church st., Toronto. Around the table, left to right: Mrs. Wm. Nelson, Toronto; Mrs. Bert Bishop, Winnipeg; Mrs. Horace Alyea, Consecon; Mrs. John Goodmurphy, Belleville; and Mrs. Stewart. Behind them is a portrait of their father. Below is a picture of the BELLE SHERIDAN, her beam misspelled by the crayon artist who drew her long ago. She was a victim of Lake Ontario's fury with six Toronto sailors, four out of one family.