

Toronto Telegram, February 17, 1945
Schooner Days, DCLXXX (680)
By C.H.J. Snider

PORT CREDIT SEVENTY YEARS AGO

HERE we have a tintype of about 1870, of two smart young Credit sailors in their Sunday best, identified by old-timers as “Young Abe” Block and Peter Sharpe, brother of Capt. Dan Sharpe of the *Minnie Blakeley*. Abram Block, J.P., one of the pillars of Methodism in Port Credit, died not long ago, in his eighties, full of years and honors. He was the oldest son of Abram Block, pioneer of Port Credit, who came to this country from Yorkshire in 1837. He discovered the great anchor at Holland Landing in that year “Young Abe” was his first mate, cook and crew, in the tiny stonehooker, *Ann Brown*, which was long in the family. She is shown above the sailor boys. Abram Block, J.P., here tintyped in his twenties, owned several vessels and was in partnership with the late Capt. John Miller in the Port Credit shipyard of the 1890's.

THE tintype of the dear old couple of “Credit worthies” was identified promptly by Mr. Wilmer Caven, 266 Westmoreland avenue and his family, as a picture of their grandfather and grandmother, Mr. and Mrs. William Caven, who had a farm on the Lake Shore road, about a mile east of Port Credit almost a hundred years ago.

We are informed that three Caven brothers were early settlers south of what was then called the Middle road, because the Dundas highway was farther north and the first lake shore road followed the lake bank closely from the Humber to the Credit. William's farm was nearest Toronto, then came James, or “Boss” Caven, and next Hughie, nearest the Credit. A creek ran through his property, and he did not like so much water. This was probably the creek later known as “Watson's at the Caven line.”

William Caven's son, Thomas McCready Caven, married Miss Elizabeth Beamish of Shelburne. He died some years ago, but she is living, the mother of Wilmer, Thomas, Richard and Walter Caven and will be ninety on the 5th of March. Her home is near Orangeville, whither these Cavens removed many years ago. Other descendants of the Caven family, known as the Cabbage Kings, have market gardens near Port Credit.

James Caven, known as “Boss” for his ability at barn-raising and community enterprises, had two quarter-acre lots on Toronto street (Lake Shore road) in Port Credit in 1853. William Caven's original home, a whitewashed log cabin, long stood south of the Lake Shore road, and the first public school for Port Credit was built on the Caven property, near the side of a later schoolhouse of lake shore and field stone, since turned into a dwelling.

Mrs. W. H. Graham, now of 203 Westmoreland ave., also identified the couple in Saturday's Schooner Days, as her grandfather and grandmother, Mr. and Mrs. William Caven.

Mrs. Graham's father was John C. Caven, who died about 10 years ago, aged 95. An architect-carpenter-contractor, he grew up at the mouth of the Credit. “I often heard my father

talk about those days,” said Mrs. Graham. “There were two Caven farms running to the water edge where the boats came in. One was that of my grandfather, the other the farm of his brother, Robert Caven.” Mrs. Graham tells of remembering calling the latter “Uncle Bob.”

Capt. Richard Goldring of Port Whitby, the Maple Leaf man, also recognized the picture of Mr. and Mrs. Caven, and confirmed that the schooner, *Mary E. Ferguson*, was built and launched from the Caven farm in 1868.

FROM Miami comes this tribute to Port Credit sailors, still living, Capt. A. E. Hare. Capt. Stephen Peer, Capt. Charlie Peer and Capt. Fred Block, the surviving stonehooker men who took off the crew of the *Augusta*, Nov. 25th, 1900.

“Listening to my daughter reading The Evening Telegram, dated Jan. 27th, 1945, I heard about a boat that went ashore at Port Credit and it brought back the biggest thrill I ever had in my life, believe me. I was at the shore in the snowstorm watching those brave men go out with waves going right over the lighthouse. I never thought those men would ever see land again, but they did, and brought back some of the men on board and then went back and got the Captain and the others remaining. If men ever should have a medal those men should have one. If they are alive they must be old men by this time. And I would like to tell you the lifeboat from Toronto was there, and couldn’t get out to the wreck.

“I have heard my daughter read The Telegram all my life, and I still do, away down here.

– Reader of The Telegram.