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Schooner Days DCLXXXVIII (688)
By C.H.J. Snider

“CARRIER DOVE OF CHERRY VALLEY”

CHERRY VALLEY – not the New York State village, scene of slaughter so long ago, but the tiny Ontario ghost port still shining proudly on the map and in the hearts of all lovers of Britain.

Yes, a ghost port, but very much alive, with perhaps a population of one hundred within its borders next Sunday morning, but six or seven hundred next Sunday evening, not including in either census the scores who sleep sweetly in the little ridge cemetery after ploughing furrows among the watery ridges of the Great Lakes last century and this. Captains, mates, cooks, crews, owners, agents, shipwrights, caulkers, carpenters, fishermen, all the great cloud of witnesses of schooner days, are to be found there among the farmers and artisans, storekeepers and specialists, mechanics and medicos who made Prince Edward County what it is.

Cherry Valley might have faded into forgottenness like its own port, or Pumpkinville and Nineveh and Tyre, all of which were equally real once, had it not been for the inspiration of one man, nineteen years ago and the veil of another.

Captain Nelson Palmateer, schooled under his brothers in the Prince Edward schooner *Flying Scud* eighty years ago, in his later days introduced an innovation into his beloved Methodist Church in the village. This was a farewell service each spring for the county sailors who were leaving home to join their ships fitting out in various lake ports for the season. He had many helpers, among them the “running reporter,” of Lindley Calnan’s county paper, the Picton Gazette – Philip Dodds, of Cherry Valley – who knew everybody in the county and whom everybody knew and liked. Philip is a born man-to-man mixer, and he has taken the invasion of the county by Army, Navy and Air Force in his stride. Every man jack in the Hasty P’s, every county Wren in the RCN, every angel male and female in the RCAF is Philip’s friend. But he has maintained and extended Capt. Palmateer’s pious foundation until the sailors’ farewell attracted attention from the first. It filled the little church. Capt. Palmateer passed to his reward years ago, but the mariners’ service and Philip Dodds ran on. The latter has long been the news editor of the Gazette, and has driven a car – but he still runs, up to everybody’s front door, or around to the back, and everybody is the better for his cheerful call. He is sought as the organizer for every county enterprise of benevolent purposes, and is the driving force behind all that succeed.

Mariner’s Service Sunday fills Cherry Valley with automobiles from all over the province in spite of gas rationing, and the little church on the hill is crammed and crowded with all it can hold – and more, for the attendance overflows into the Sunday school room and the church woodshed.

So everybody in Ontario knows of Cherry Valley.

Cherry Valley has drowsed all this week in the April sunshine which has changed the mud of the farm lanes to dust already. It is a most pleasant pleasant spot, a small group of cozy one-story

and two-story houses set in gardens.

All roads in Prince Edward are “streets” and called such, so we have Christian Street and could have Ship Harbor Street and Point Peter Street, wandering through farmlands to Petticoat Point, Sodom and Gomorrah and Babylon. The county is a priceless treasury of place names. They should be copyrighted.

Perhaps the early settlers chose lots on both sides of the roadway allowance and the road itself was not built until long after the homes, but it is no uncommon discovery to find a comely farmhouse on one side of the street and the stable and barn belonging to it on the other.

Instances of this occur in Cherry Valley and its environs, as in other villages. The street bends, dips and rises through Cherry Valley on its way from Picton to Wellington and the west. It crosses a little creek, where large fish – pike, perch and suckers – are caught in baskets in the spring freshets. That creek used to turn the wheels of mills – flour, lumber, shingles and perhaps carding. The mill and the blacksmith shop and the cooperage “made” Cherry Valley. The place was named for the myriads of wild cherry trees which used to cover the valley slopes with fragrant snowdrifts of blossom every spring. It is yet a little early for the wild cherry and the haw trees to burst into bloom but there are plenty of them left to gladden this precocious springtide.

The village really was a port once, for the *Carrier Dove* of Cherry Valley was built there more than eighty years ago and hailed from there. She was built on the low ground, now largely overgrown with trees, below the street level and beside the creek, where yet may be found some of the evidences of the old mill. A little clipper-bowed schooner she was, white and bluish grey in color, as suited her name. She was about 45 feet long, and might, at a pinch, carry a ton of cargo for each foot of her overall length. She was meant to carry fish, fruit, grain, shingles, maple sugar, cheese and butter out of Prince Edward County in the prosperous Reciprocity decade following the Crimean War, and to bring back salt, Sunday school books, sewing machines or whatever she could get in Oswego or in the Genesee country that Prince Edward needed. County church libraries, general stores and farm homes were so stocked in the old days and traces of all except the salt are still to be found.

The *Carrier Dove* of Cherry Valley was one of a little fleet of county vessels so employed. They didn't trade directly to the village, for it was hard to reach from the lake. In fact, this *Dove*, unlike Noah's, may never have returned to the ark window of the clattering mill from which she was pushed forth so hopefully. But her cargoes did and she made money for her Cherry Valley owners.

She was, indeed, of a truant disposition. In those horse-and-buggy days big stones had to serve for anchors for small craft. In Nova Scotia they still use killicks, four prongs formed by hardwood slats bent over a central stone which gives the necessary weight. The *Carrier Dove's* anchor was even simpler, a big granite “hardhead,” tied in the bight of a rope. One day she slipped the bight of the rope off the boulder, and cavorted gaily out into the lake, trailing her cable from her bows. She gave Uncle John McConnell a merry chase, but he caught her. And in a list of vessels ashore after the great gale in 1866, when the *St. George* came to grief at Point Traverse, appears the

name *Carrier Dove*. That may have been the last of all her trauancies.

To get her out from Cherry Valley, after she had been launched, they had to float her down the mill creek to East Lake, a long, narrow marshy stretch which cuts deep into the county north of the village. A narrow passage called the Outlet connects it with Lake Ontario. The Outlet is spanned by a timber bridge. The *Carrier Dove* had to be pushed under the bridge with her new-made masts lying on deck. Once through, the bridge was used as a sheerlegs for stepping them, and she was probably rigged right on the spot. Then the first quiet day she was poled through the Outlet into Lake Ontario, and sailed around Wicked Point and Point Peter to the Gull Pond, where, after a voyage of twenty miles she was as near to Cherry Valley as when she was at the Outlet.



Henry McConnell can still steer a good trick at any vessel's wheel. He caught shiners from the deck of the Carrier Dove when a little boy, time of the American War.

Henry McConnell of Picton told of the *Carrier Dove* and her companions last summer. He used to go down to see her with his uncle when she would be lying in Gull Pond. The Pond is not many miles from Cherry Valley. It is on the south face of the county, nearest the United States, and by land approachable only by two ancient wheel tracks on which the grass never grows. By water it is also inaccessible for anything larger than the *Carrier Dove* – and she sometimes had to jump the bar to get in, as did the *Frances Farrington Cole* the time Nelson Garrison was drowned off the *Scotch Bonnet* in a gale and his partner Henry Huff had to run the little vessel halfway around the county for shelter, single handed.

The Pond is a patch of shallow water encircled by a bar and hammer-headed shoals, and to reach the entrance a task even for the fishing launches that use it. The little fleet that nested in it eighty years ago and loaded or unloaded their cargoes on its shores for the surrounding farmers were:

1. This *Carrier Dove* of Cherry Valley.
2. Sloop *Sparkling*, Capt. Heineman.
3. Schooner *Clara Hill*, Capt. John Hill, and named after his daughter. American built.
4. "The Black One," name forgotten, that lay in Gull Pond all winter, with muskrats using her centreboard slot for an underwater family entrance, until she filled and sank.
5. The *Ellie Jane*, a sloop, also American like the *Clara Hill*.
6. The *F.F. Cole*, built on the shore between Point Peter and the Gull Pond by Lige Vandusen.



CPO A.E. LIGHTHALL, RCNR, of the Alberni, Prince Edward County sailor whose memory will be honored at Cherry Valley tomorrow.

We hope to see “Uncle Henry,” the Harry-out-of-Picton of long ago, at the Mariners’ Service at Cherry Valley Sunday evening, when all Prince Edward County will try to get into the little church to pay tribute to Chief Petty Officer Gus Lighthall of the *Alberni* and Leading Seaman Calvin Grimmon, county sailors lost in the present war, and to the long list of those who have sailed or fished from Prince Edward in the last century. They will all join in Prince Edward’s annual song to those leaving now for the spring fitout – “God Be With You Till We Meet Again” – and in heaping the collection plates with contributions to the British War Victims’ Fund. Prince Edward County 100 per cent. Anglo-Saxon, has already contributed for this purpose more than \$1 per head for every man, woman and child south of the Bay of Quinte.



CAPT. L.M. GODDARD, M.M., RNR, Grafton, speaks at tomorrow’s mariner’s service.



LS CALVIN GRIMMON, RCN, of the Prince Robert, another Prince Edward sailor, lost in this war, whose memory will be honored at Cherry Valley.