

**Toronto Telegram, April 28, 1945**  
**Schooner Days DCXC (690)**  
**By C.H.J. SNIDER**

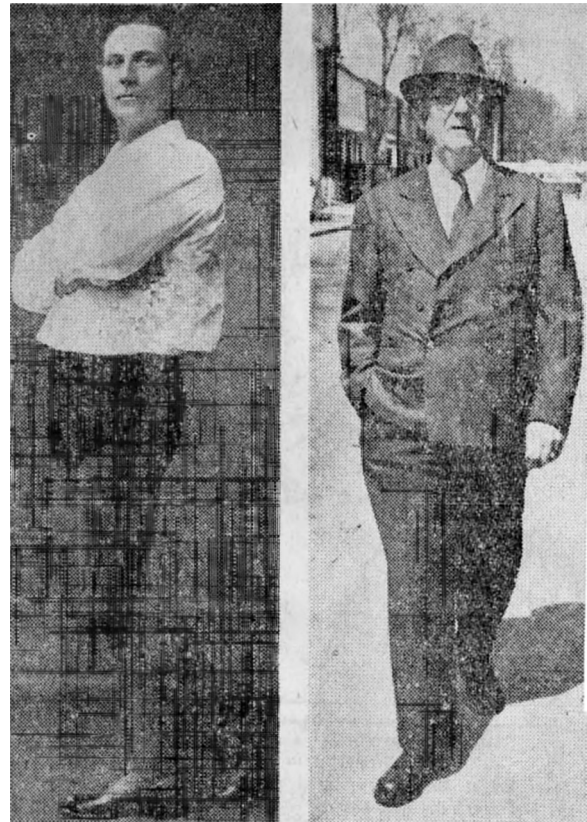
## **WON MATCH, SAVED LIFE**

IF it hadn't been for a baseball match in Belleville on Dominion Day in 1900 you would not be reading this, to-day. Because Nolton Sanford, 89 Hamilton street, Toronto, tells the story, which is completely authenticated, and Nolton played in that baseball match, and if he hadn't he wouldn't be alive now to tell the tale.

Fortune smiled on Capt. Jack Sidley all that season of 1900, the last year of the old century. He was able to get freights both ways for his well-worn craft, the schooner *Picton*, which he had refitted in Cobourg after a two-year layup, he pushed her as hard as her ancient timbers and old sails would stand, and she was paying for herself.

When they were unloading coal in Belleville, Nolton Sanford, who had joined the *Picton* as cook, was approached by an earnest delegation of his boy friends. You see, it was like this. There were four teams in the Belleville Ball League, The Rolling Mills, The Grand Trunk, The City and The Printers. Sam Stevenson was the Printers' manager and McDermott of the Intelligence had built them up, and they had a chance for the championship in the Dominion Day match – but they needed a pitcher, oh, so bad. Nolton knew how to pitch, none better, and he wouldn't let his old chums down, with so much depending on it.

Nolton promised them, and braced Capt. Sidley for a leave – just for one trip, for the *Picton* would be back from Charlotte with another load of coal for Shuster's yard by the time the match was over. Capt. Sidley demurred. He even sent his wife to get Mrs. Sanford to persuade Nolton to change his mind. But Nolton had promised the Printers, and they couldn't get a sub for him as a pitcher, and Capt. Sidley reluctantly shipped Walter Dunn of Belleville to take Nolton's place on deck. Barney Ayres went as cook in the galley. Frank Smith of Belleville replaced Clark Taylor as mate, for the latter had gone to sail the little *Eliza Fisher*.



*Nolton Sanford*  
*Then* *Now*  
*Premier Tap Dancer* *Toronto Citizen*

The *Picton* was still short-handed nominally, although she had enough crew for a summer voyage. Vessey, the captain's 12-year-old son, had his school holidays coming, and went with the schooner for this trip. With his chronic aversion to passengers, Capt. Sidley signed him on as a "hand." Mrs. Sidley wanted to come, too, but her husband was adamant against it. He could not disguise her, to himself, either as a hand or a cook, for he had a cook – and he wouldn't have a passenger.

Perhaps the man who slipped off the deckload in Lake Huron was a passenger.

Anyway, out they sailed, and again loaded in Charlotte for Belleville. The morning of July 1st, 1900, broke clear and cold, after rain, it was really bitterly cold, as we sometimes get it in July. All Belleville turned out shivering as Nolton Sanford marched to the mound, but the way he pitched against Bob Pallas for the G.T.R. and his catcher, Jack Marks, in turn – Jack was a great wing man in intermediate hockey, and a grand pitcher, too – warmed everybody up. The Printers won the championship, and the boys preserved Nolton Sanford's amateur standing by taking up a collection of \$9.80 in dimes, to recognize his good sportsmanship; for he was a married man with a home to keep and had given up a good berth to save their bacon.

Four schooners lay in Charlotte that Dominion Day, laden for Canada. Byron Bongard, in the best of them, the *Acacia*, didn't like the look of the weather, the morning was too proud. Jim Savage, an older man in an older vessel, the *Annie Minnes*, wasn't keen on going either. Nor was Nate McCrimmon, or whoever was sailing the *Two Brothers* at the time.

But Jack Sidley in the *Picton* lying inside the tier, cocked an eye at the flies streaming toward Belleville and said it would take more than that to stop the *Picton*, for it was a fair wind home, and only 60 miles to South Bay Point. As they had to shift to let the *Picton* out, anyway, the others made sail, too.

Light or loaded, the *Picton* was fast, and she quickly overhauled and passed the vessels which had started ahead of her. The *Acacia*, waiting to reef her mainsail in harbor, was three or four miles astern of the *Picton*, and the others about two miles astern of her, running wing and wing. It had freshened, and the sea was making up. Byron Bongard was glad he had reefed his mainsail. Jim Savage was thinking he had better take his in altogether, when he saw the *Picton*'s sails fluttering down, every one of them, till only the peaks were showing. He thought she was reefing, too. She swung into the trough, rolled, and was gone.

One minute her fly was waving against the stormy sky, next there was nothing where she had been.

Young Will Savage was mate of the *Minnes*, and it was his trick at the wheel. He saw his father cross himself and his lips move in The Lord's Prayer as he fell on his knees on deck.

"Will," said he, rising. "Let your vessel drop down a little before we do any reefing."

Ten minutes later they sailed over the spot where the *Picton*'s sails fluttered from sight. They saw a sailor's cap and a handspike and a loose board. Nothing more. Long later a mainboom washed up from there.

Months afterwards a fisherman's son down Sackets Harbor way saw a bottle bobbing in Chaumont Bay, off Point Peninsula. He saw it the next day. And the next.

"Father," he said, "I can't get over that bottle. It seems to bob up every morning."

"Well, row out and see what it is," said the father.

"Perhaps it's a buoy of some kind to mark something hidden."

It was a ketchup bottle, corked, and the cork seized into place by wire. There was a sheet of paper inside. On it was this, in pencil:

HAVE LASHED VESSEY TO ME WITH HEAVING  
LINE SO WILL BE FOUND TOGETHER.  
J. SIDLEY, PICTON.