

Toronto Telegram, April 12, 1947
Schooner Days DCCXCI (791)
By C.H.J. Snider

RICH TREASURE GUARDED WELL

Schooner Days are the tie that binds Toronto and Oswego, although a new generation has arisen which knows nothing of brigs and less of the fleets of tall schooners which both cities could once boast. The first brick building in Toronto, Quetton St. George's mansion at the corner of Frederick and King streets, is said to have been built of brick from Oswego, in 1807. That brick came by schooner. And the last rum runner captured by the prohibition navy of the Great Lakes and sold by the U.S. marshal in Oswego was an ex-Toronto vessel. Her demise closed the schooner era on Lake Ontario, at the end of its second century.

SQUARE-RIGGED CITY CREST

The crest of the City of Oswego, since its incorporation in 1843, is actually a full-rigged brig, which we discussed somewhat, fully last week. The brig-crested city possesses a great treasure and guards it carefully. It is the "diary" or lake marine history, of Capt. James Van Cleve, going back to La Salle's *Griffon* and coming forward to the schooners and steamers of 1876. Capt. Van Cleve only intended to carry his record up to 1850, but was so engrossed with his subject that he ran on to 1877, the year he presented his volume to the city in which he had spent the most of his lakefaring life. He was born in New Jersey in 1808, came to Lake Ontario in 1820, and was steamboating in 1826 when steam was only nine years old on the lakes. He spent his boyhood in Lewiston, N.Y., and returned there when he "swallowed the anchor." He had been captain of the Oswego schooner *St. Lawrence* in 1831 and of several steamers, and an Oswego vessel owner since the first propeller turned, for he built and equipped the pioneer *Vandalia* there in 1841.

GRAND GIFT WELL EXECUTED

His memoirs are a handsome work, viewed from any angle. A stout canvas bound heavily embossed volume like a great ledger, on very good paper, all in handwriting bold and clear, with red-ink capitals and captions and illustration in crayon and water color. The illustration consists in portraits of lake steamers from the earliest times, scenes, maps, plans and portraits. Capt. Van Cleve was either an outstanding water color artist for his time or had the assistance of one. Most of the drawing is his own original work. Some is copied from prints old when Capt. Van Cleve was young.

The coloring is often brilliant, and the information given both by the pictures and text is often first hand. In his dedication, Sept. 10th, 1877, Capt. Van Cleve stipulated that the Mayor of Oswego would supervise and scrutinize additions to the work, for which he left captions and spaces to be filled in. The volume is therefore properly a municipal charge and in its proper place at the City Hall. The donor modestly entitled it:

"Reminiscences of the early period of sailing vessels and steam boats upon Lake Ontario with a history of the introduction of the propeller on the lakes, and other historical incidents, with various illustrations of Steamers and Old Forts, etc., which I hope in the future will be interesting to the Antiquary and the Public."

VANISHED FROM DEATH BED

There is a legend that Captain Van Cleve who spent the last eight years of his life in Sandwich Ontario, was engaged in a second volume, dealing with the history of lake navigation from 1850 onward and that his manuscript disappeared from his home the night he died. At any rate the City of Oswego takes no chances on losing the priceless original volume. It was specifically entrusted by Capt. Van Cleve to the municipality as custodian, so it is kept at the City Hall like the Crown Jewels in the Tower of London. It is locked in the safe in the city clerk's office, and the mayor and the acting city clerk are responsible for it. It is courteously shown on application, but is never allowed out of official sight, not for one moment.

The Oswego municipal set-up is somewhat different from ours, the city clerk being as replaceable as a cabinet minister, but the acting clerk a permanent official, and combining the duties of purchasing agent. Thus Mayor McCaffrey's vis-a-vis in the guardianship of the treasure is a vigilant official who has the art of always being at city hall when wanted.



CAPTAIN VAN CLEVE AND HIS WATCHDOGS. HON. I.T. McCAFFREY. Mayor of Oswego and by his office present custodian of the volume.



Oswego's acting City Clerk and purchasing agent with the treasured volume on her desk.

For some years now the acting city clerk and purchasing agent has been Miss Gertrude A. Thompson, a young lady singularly well equipped to discharge the guardianship of Capt. Van Cleve's treasure.

PASSING HAILS

Grand old mariner greatly bereaved

Henry McConnell, Picton, Ontario, one of few remaining veteran sailors of Schooner Days, known all over the lakes as Harry-out-of-Picton, lost his dearly beloved wife, Amy Teresa Hudgin, Monday morning, April 7th. She was in her 83rd year.

They would have celebrated their 40th wedding anniversary on 17th of January, 1948. They were married in 1888 at Cherry Valley Parsonage by Rev. McCauley. Mrs. McConnell resided in Athol Township until her husband completed fifteen years before the mast on lake schooners. He celebrated his 88th birthday February 27, 1947.

From 1891 till 1913 they farmed at Royal Street, that long highway through the county.

They moved to Picton in 1913 after farming at Royal Street from 1891. They bought the Slattery estate, 6 Elizabeth street, in 1924, where they had since resided. It can be said of their home "the door was never locked." Friends and neighbors were always welcomed. Strangers in need never turned away empty-handed.

Amy Teresa Hudgin was a devoted Christian. As a member of the United Church, Mrs. McConnell took an active interest in church and Sunday school work. She was a member of her church choir.

Mrs. McConnell was the last member of the Moses Hudgin and Ann Mouck family of Babylon district, South Marysburgh Township. Her five brothers, Michael, Solomon, Lewis, Philip and Waite, and her three sisters, Sarah Ann, Charlotte and Liza Jane, predeceased her.

Surviving are her husband, an only son, Percy Lorne, and one grandson, Roscoe.

Funeral service was held Wednesday, April 9, from her late residence at 2 p.m. Interment was in Cherry Valley Cemetery.

– From a friend in The Picton Times.

CAPT. W. D. GRAHAM, 91 COMES THROUGH FIRE

St. Catharines, April 11 – (CP) – Capt. W. D. Graham, 91, retired Great Lakes master, and one of this city's oldest residents, suffered burns about the head today when he tripped and fell in a smouldering bonfire he was tending. He is in hospital but his condition is not considered serious.

Hundreds of sailors will hope for Capt. Graham's speedy recovery. He is one of Schooner Days' most interesting contributors.