

Toronto Telegram, November 1, 1947
Schooner Days DCCCXIX (819)
By C. H. J. SNIDER

\$100 DOCKWALLOPER WAS ONE MAPLE LEAF

It takes more than one leaf to clothe a maple, so more than one Canadian schooner bore the pleasant name of *Maple Leaf*.

This in answer to recent queries about the *Maple Leaf* of Toronto, Capt. Richard Goldring's lifelong sweetheart, whose end as the *Banshee* seems to have interested many readers. We have twice missed a pleasant call from Rev. N. C. S. Goldring of Barrie, Canadian Chaplain and Capt. Richard's son, when he has been in town. Hope he will not bear this against us but will give us a third chance.

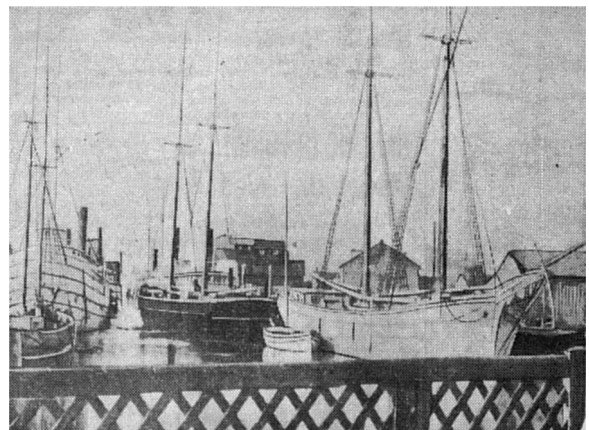
After the last *Maple Leaf* had been from the tree of lake shipping – and she was Capt. Goldring's famous schooner – there were still six others of that name on the Dominion register in the Maritime Provinces. The first *Maple Leaf* of which nautical record is found in lake history has a large steamer of that name built in Kingston, 1851. We have her way bills for flour, wheat, butter, brandy, sheepskins, stoves and furniture shipped out of old Port Whitby early in March, 1854, some years before Capt. Richard Goldring, long resident in that port, was born. By coincidence, that very year, 1854, a large American schooner launched in Buffalo from G. S. Weeks' yard was christened *Maple Leaf*, though she was not destined for the Canadian market. W. H. Barclay was her owner, in Milwaukee. She survives in that lake ballad of the 1870's known as "The Cruise of the *Bigler*," where the singer tells how

"The *Hunter* eased her towline
For to give us some relief
And the *Bigler* went astern and ran
Right into the *Maple Leaf*."

What else happened to this *Maple Leaf* is unknown.

Another *Maple Leaf* was the schooner built at Picton in the year of Confederation, 1867, by Jack Tait and Joseph Redmond, two well known Prince Edward builders. She was of 114 tons register, 97 feet long, 21 feet 6 inches beam and 7 feet 7 inches deep in the hold; shoal, but well calculated for the booming barley trade out of the Bay of Quinte, or the lumber trade "up above," as Bay was known.

Many Ontario schooners went to Georgian Bay in the 1870's, attracted by the possibilities of the lumber trade there, or



The PHOEBE CATHARINE (right, white), shown here at an Owen Sound wharf, was – almost – a twin of the MAPLE LEAF.

bought by Owen Sound merchants for that particular purpose, but few brought their bones back for burial in Lake Ontario.

“Beware, beware of the Bight of Benin,
Few have come out though many have been in.”

was the Gold Coast rhyme, and the same might be said of Georgian Bay. The *Son and Heir*, *Marion L. Breck*, *Gold Hunter*, *Ariel*, *Albatross*, *White Oak*, *Jane Ann Marsh*, *Sweepstakes* and many another Lake Ontario born barkie left their bones there. Three similar Prince Edward County schooners went north about the same time when they were all young, the *Phoebe Catharine*, *Prince Edward* and *Maple Leaf*,

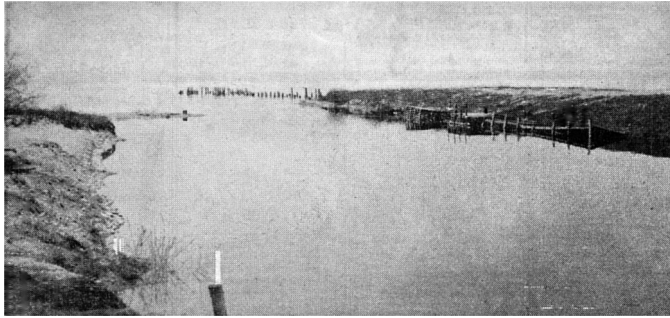
The *Phoebe Catharine*, named after two sisters, respected and prosperous daughters of Prince Edward County, was haunted by misadventure from her birth. Her first mishap was driving ashore in a heavy November snowstorm at Wellington, Ont., in her very first year, 1865, with eight or ten thousand bushels of grain aboard. But she got off, which was very lucky, for Wellington has a wicked beach. After she went to Georgian Bay she achieved a reputation of being haunted by a woman in white, less unpleasant than the Wellington boulders.

The *Phoebe Catharine* got into so many troubles around Owen Sound she was nicknamed the Lawyer's Joy and wound up as a tow barge at Parry Sound. The *Prince Edward* was frozen in one winter at Little Current in Manitoulin and her captain, one of the McNabbs, died aboard her trying to bring her to Owen Sound in the following spring. She was later sailed by Capt. Tim Crawley, who also sailed the *Phoebe Catharine*, and by Capt. McLaughlin of Owen Sound, and was ultimately wrecked on Cockburn Island. The third of the trio, the *Maple Leaf*, had plenty of adventures, some of them unpleasant, on Georgian Bay, but survived to be sold to Lake Erie, where she ended her days.

In 1870 this *Maple Leaf* of Picton was bought by James Sutherland of Owen Sound, and taken to Georgian Bay, Capt. Jas. Foote was her master. In September, 1872, she loaded 118,739 feet B.M. of lumber at Collins Inlet for Collingwood. Early in the morning of September 13th, being six miles off Nottawasaga Light, the rain pouring in sheets and wind and sea heavy, she let go her anchor and forty-five fathoms of chain, hoping to ride out the bad night in the open. But even with 270 feet of chain down she could get no bottom. That is one of Georgian Bay's perils – no soundings one moment, rocks just awash perhaps the next. Repeated soundings failing to get bottom, because she had no lead line long enough, and no more chain, they lowered all sail but the double reefed mainsail and so came head to wind somewhat, but adrift and rolling rails under in the trough of the sea. Thus she lost 2,000 feet of lumber from her deckload and wrecked her windlass barrel and bitts, making it impossible to weigh the dangling anchor. When daylight came Capt. Foote slipped the hook, chain and all, hoisted his headsails and made the best of his way to Collingwood, where he filed a marine protest before George Moberly, J.P.

In 1878 this *Maple Leaf* opened navigation into Collingwood with a cargo of 6,000 bushels of corn.

Her next adventure is thus described by the late A. H. Ross in his *Reminiscences of North Sydenham*, describing the old loading dock at Leith in that township:



Old wharf at Leith on the east side of Owen Sound where a Prince Edward County schooner pounded long, long ago.

“There were many mishaps (to the dock) during these periods of heavy weather, one of which had rather an amusing sequel. The schooner *Maple Leaf*, loaded with wheat, was caught in one of them while moored to the dock and threatened to pound it to pieces. The storm rose a little after sunset and a steamboat captain in Owen Sound was wired to, with the request that he bring his boat down and endeavor to tow the schooner out to deep water, where she

could get canvas on herself without danger of being driven ashore. He put in an appearance in answer to the call, but the night was such a wild one that in the pitch darkness prevailing he thought it safest not to go near the dock at all, so the *Maple Leaf* was left to ride out the storm. She did so, but the resultant damage to the dock was disheartening to look at when the gale had subsided.

“Mr. Ainslie – either Adam Ainslie or his cousin, George Ainslie, who formed a partnership in 1857 and purchased the townsite of Leith for \$20,000 ‘sight unseen’ – promptly entered an action for damages against her owners, employing counsel. He was awarded them in the paltry sum of one hundred dollars. He then went to pay his lawyer. That gentleman had evidently made up his mind to charge all the traffic would bear. He informed his client in an apologetic tone, as though ashamed of his own modesty, that ‘he guessed his bill would be about ninety-five dollars.’

“‘Take it all while you’re at it’, said Mr. Ainslie, throwing him the hundred across the table.”

Perhaps that was why the battering *Maple Leaf* chose Lake Erie for her last resting place. Georgian Bay was what they call in the navy hard lying.

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