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Schooner Days XCV (95)
By C.H.J. Snider

End of the Edward Blake

And some others as well. That invaluable correspondent, John Rudolph Redfern Macdonald, Goderich fisherman, better and more briefly known as "Red," comes on deck with the fate of the schooner in which McGarrigle, Chicago's fugitive police chief, escaped fifty years ago, as already told. Incidentally, before the McGarrigle incident, the Edward Blake made a voyage from Sheboygan to London with square timber, and Aemilius Jarvis sailed in her before the mast. This was the first salt water sailing of the greatest yachtsman and skipper Canada has known.

"I GET The Telegram specially every Saturday night," writes "Red," "and sure like reading Schooner Days. You asked in one paper last year, "Does anyone know what became of the Edward Blake?" Well, here is Mr. Blake's last trip. I would have answered sooner but I was waiting to see a fellow that was in the Craftsman when the Edward Blake was lost.

"In the year 1896 the schooners *Craftsman* and *Edward Blake* both loaded mill supplies at Sarnia for Byng Inlet, and the steamer *United Lumberman* towed them both out through the Rapids. They had a light breeze from the southward all night, and next day, when about abreast of the Fishing Islands in Georgian Bay, it started to blow from the eastward and kept getting worse, and when they got up to the Cove Island it was coming down pretty hot.

"The schooner *Erie Stewart*, a long-legged fore-'n'-after, was in their company, bound for Collingwood, coal loaded. The *Blake* and the *Craftsman* were, of course, three-'n'-afters, with squaresail yards.

"They were all shortened down to the last tuck, and wouldn't come in stays with the sea that was running. There being more ways of killing a cat than choking her with butter, they wore the *Blake* and the *Stewart* around on the starboard tack and stood to the northward, while the *Craftsman* wore around on the port tack and stood to the southward, down Lake Huron. She was blown all the way across to Alpena, lay there two days, started for the Cove, got back to Michael's Bay Light, and was blown back to Thunder Bay the second time.

"The *Blake* fetched up on the Duck Islands in Georgian Bay—the Middle Duck—and went to pieces. The *Erie Stewart* struck the Jennie Graham shoals. The next sea lifted her clear. They kept her free with the pumps and squared her away before the wind. She finally made the Missisagi Straits at the far end of Manitoulin Island and came to anchor on Cockburn Island.

"I will tell you about the finish of the *Erie Stewart* and the schooner *Ontario* another time. They both went out the same night.

"Capt. McPherson was in command of the *Craftsman*, Capt. Lyons in the *Stewart*, and Capt. Sidley in the *Blake* at this time. I knew Capt. Sidley, and the poor fellow had hard luck, though he escaped with his life when he lost the *Blake*. He had lost the schooner *Arctic* on Long Point on Lake Erie a year or so before the *Blake*, and two of her crew were drowned." (This is the schooner *Muir Brothers* built at Port Dalhousie years and years before. She might have survived her stranding on Long Point, but the waney pine used to dunnage her cargo of square timber swelled and burst off her decks.) "I heard he bought an interest in the schooner *Picton* of

Port Hope after he lost the *Blake*, and he was lost himself in her with all hands on Lake Ontario.

"The schooner *Bavarian* was lost in the same gale of wind as the *Blake*. The *Azov*, the *Bavarian*, and the *John G. Kolfage*, which my father, Capt. John Macdonald, then sailed (he got the *Azov* later), all towed out of Byng Inlet together, lumber loaded, for Sarnia. Capt. Munro had the *Azov* at this time, and Capt. Mahoney was in the *Bavarian*.

"It was a hard breeze. It started in the east, but went to the south and southwest. We got safely into Tobermory with the *Kolfage*, and were still lying there when they were taking the *Blake's* crew home on the passenger steamer after her loss. The steamer put into Tobermory on her way to Owen Sound. The *Azov* rode out the gale to an anchor, between Echo and the Cove, but the *Bavarian* went ashore at James Bay, on the Manitoulin, near Cape Smith. Her crew were all night in the rigging, and got ashore next day on rafts they built from her deckload."