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Schooner Days MLXXXVIII (1088)
By C.H.J. Snider

Morning Light and What Befell

It was four o'clock in the morning of Saturday Nov. 22, 1879 when the *Waubuno* left Collingwood harbor on her delayed voyage for Parry Sound. She had to wait for the weather.

The early bird!

All was yet dark as night, and the Georgian Bay looked black as the pit of Acheron. But the nor' wester which had raved all day before had lulled off, the sky had thinned and showed faint stars, the snow which had fallen refracted the light which seemed to promise fair.

The ten passengers were asleep after the anxious night, the crew of fourteen in the *Waubuno* were wide awake. Two men for the hand steering wheel, two engineers for the throttle. The firemen crammed her furnace with good dry beech and maple, in 4-foot cordwood sticks. Heavy going outside, after that northwest gale! She was loaded deep, and she hadn't more horsepower than would be developed by a modern runabout.

Her hurricane deck was 22 feet above the water level. She was shoal and slim and easily driven fast. In smooth water. In rough water it could be a different story. With so much upper work she might be top heavy unless very carefully laden, with the center of gravity kept low and everything dunnaged against shifting. But how far down can you go in a 7 ft. hold?

According to a story still current her captain had to take aboard against his will a ton or two of barreled whiskey, which had to be carried on the upper deck for lack of space below.

Lightkeeper's Last Look

It was dark as ever at 6 o'clock as new clouds had blotted out the dim stars. There was no light reflected from the black and rolling water, and the faint glow of the snow-clad mainland had faded out astern.

It was at 6 o'clock that John Hoar, the Christian Island lighthouse keeper, saw the *Waubuno's* cabin lights, from his own gleaming tower. She was going pretty lively, by the way the squares and circles of her lighted ports and windows rose and fell, but she was making steady progress. Sparks flung a trail of ruby dust, from her wee funnel. The boys were certainly shoveling in the cordwood! The glow was reflected on the diamond shaped walking beam, pumping steadily up and down. She was keeping away from the shelter of a few of the 30,000 islands which fringe the east shore of Georgian Bay.

That was the last scene of the *Waubuno* alive.

The snow set in again, thick thick blinding. At noon that Saturday lumbermen at Moon River on the east shore heard the *Waubuno's* whistle through the driving flakes. On the Georgian Bay in those early days each steamer's whistle was as recognizable as a man's voice. They

thought the *Waubuno* was groping for the winding South Channel into Parry Sound by way of the Haystacks, having failed to find Lone Rock, the usual guide post, in the snow.

That was the last heard of the *Waubuno*.