

The Toronto Telegram, April 25, 1953
Schooner Days MCII (1102)
By C.H.J. Sinder

OSWEGO N.Y., June, 1805

How lovely to wake up in bright early sunshine in a new world! Thus did young Mrs. Anne MacDonell of Toronto at 6 o'clock in the morning of the 5th of June 1805, when after three days tossing on Lake Ontario, Matthew McNairs schooner PEGGY brought her into her home port, Oswego N.Y. And then? according to Mrs. MacDonell's surviving diary: Went on shore at 8 o'clock to McNairs Tavern had a tolerable breakfast, after which we took a walk through the town and to the old French fort, half a mile back or rather above the town by the lakeside, "It is also green on this side (the west) though a good deal overgrown with scraggy bushes, There is an old flag staff standing but whether it is so old a date as when this fort was inhabited I cannot judge, though I imagine not." It is a delightful situation, though the ground is not as high as the British fort on the opposite side. It is very green, and has a beautiful appearance from this side.

The old French fort was the Fort Oswego ordered by William III in 1698 and completed in 1727. This was captured and destroyed by the French in the year 1756, but France never built fortifications at Oswego. By the British fort on the opposite side she meant Fort Ontario, built by the British in 1755, also captured by the French in 1756; re-occupied by the British in 1758 and held by them up to 1796, 20 years after the American revolution, It is still in use by the U.S. Army, Ruins of Fort Oswego, which was built of stone, persisted into the 20th century, but disappeared when the hill on which it stood was cut down to fill the low lying site of the early town built by the lakeside, Montcalm (or Abbe Picquet) did leave a tall flagpole and a high cross the commemorate the French triumph in 1756, only 49 years before. The town the diary goes on is situated at the entrance of the river, which is very narrow, with a bar at some distance out in the lake, "Tis a dirty place, Every house seems to have the appearance of a tavern, and the town consists of about 20 houses, and stores surrounded by a set of idle people. There whole employment is, I believe to bring down salt from the Oswego Falls, 12 miles up the river, It is brought there from Onondaga in boats, there being a carrying-place of a mile, Tis then taken to the Oswego boats, which go up and down the same-day, so that here is a constant passing of boats, and many thousands of barrels of salt lying on the wharf, They buy and sell with it as with money, and as it seems their whole employ, I think it must be a very idle place in winter, the whole communication being shut, no road, the river froze, and the vessels done sailing. It would be a wretched place to be detained (in For) the winter on our return. The observant Anne kept this in mind, Her return journey was made in November, and she avoided being frozen up at Oswego by braving the jolts and potholes of the rude American bush roads and turnpikes all the way from Albany to Buffalo. That, however, was months ahead of her present diary entry, She had more to say about Oswego, and it shall be given, But with your kind permission we shall have a salty interlude or two.

G.B.M. Aug. 25, 76.