

**Toronto Telegram, January 22, 1955**  
**Schooner Days MCCIV (1204)**  
**By C. H. J. SNIDER**

### **THREE SHIPS AND THE WILLOW**

WEARY you may be of the old willow yet sprouting at the foot of Bathurst st., and him harping on what he saw half a century ago – when the Queen's Wharf and the Western Channel used to be where now motors by the million whirl in six traffic lanes. But prop your ears open for one wreck more, one that ended a long chain of disasters and put half a mile of yeasty waves under solid concrete and brick and mortar. .

On the night of Nov. 21, 1906, three vessels laden with Toronto's winter fuel were plunging at their anchors outside Toronto harbor, for the very good reason that they couldn't get in. They tried the Eastern Gap and the Western, and there was not water enough in either for 11-foot draught. They had to wait for a rise.

Farthest west, almost abreast of the foot of Dufferin st., was the steam barge *Resolute*, Capt. Fahey. East of her and a little farther off shore was her consort, the tow-barge *P. B. Locke*, an ex-schooner. Farther east and south the three-masted schooner *St. Louis*, in the same predicament, had anchored.

While the wind held easterly the vessels were protected by the western sandbar of Toronto Island. At nightfall, when it shifted to southwest and blew a gale, all three were caught on a lee shore. The *Resolute* was leaking badly. She could not steam out into the raging lake herself, much less tow her own barge, or the independent *St. Louis* clear of the land. All three had to trust to their anchors.

John Fahey was master of the *Resolute*, but Capt. John Sullivan, "Cap Sullivan" of political fame, marine superintendent of the Haney and Miller fleet to which the *Resolute* and the *Locke* belonged, had accompanied the vessels to Erie, where they landed, and was actually in charge for the voyage. From horseboy to certified master, John Sullivan had sailed in everything that navigated the lakes; he was at this time 57, lean, keen and wise.

### **ANXIOUS WATCH**

John Sullivan hung over the compass bowl in the wheelhouse, watching the lubber's mark range

SW, WSW, W, WSW, SW, from southwest to west and back again, the straining *Resolute* nosed the wind. Never would it swing north of west, which would have smoothed the raging seas and given the sobbing steam pumps respite.

Fahey burst into the wheel-house like one of the midnight gusts that shook the spray-drenched ship.

“The pumps can’t keep her clear,” he reported. “She’s settled by the stern. The coal’s shifting aft on top of the water. The fires won’t last five minutes

“Slip your cables and run her into the Gap as far as we can get her,” counseled Sullivan.

“Can’t -”

The crew came rushing for life belts. “The windlass is under water, and it’s up to the firebed,” they shouted.

“I’m getting the boats ready!” said Fahey.

“Call the cook!” Capt. Sullivan reminded him. Forty years’ warfare with the Great Lakes had taught him who was likeliest to be lost in a wreck.

Mrs. Lizzie Callahan of St. Catharines was dragged barefoot from her berth. No time to get more over her nightgown than her cloth skirt. Capt. Fahey tore off his own coat and wrapped it around her, and tumbled her into a lifeboat.

The *Resolute’s* two boats were carried on her engine house at the stern. The ship was listing to starboard, with her stern level with the water, and the starboard boat was the easiest to launch.

The port one was higher and harder, but was got down. John Harrison, chief engineer, David White, deck hand. Harry Gregory and John Barnes, firemen, and Nels Nelson, wheelsman, got off.

## **STUNNED**

Mike Haney of Buffalo, mate of the *Resolute*, the painter easing this boat astern, when the iron davit above him carried away and struck him on the head. He was stunned and knocked overboard, came up beside the floating starboard boat and was dragged into it.

The port boat, thus adrift before the oars could be shipped, capsized. Five men clung to it. Their cries came fainter and fainter against the raving gale. All drowned. Some, floated by their lifebelts, washed up on the island beach many days later.

In the starboard boat were Mrs. Callaghan, the cook, Andy Hicks, wheelsman, Ernest McBeth, deckhand, Capt. Fahey and the stunned mate.

“Oh, captain! Aren’t you coming?” cried Mrs. Callaghan. As the cook called, the *Resolute* dipped stern under and went down, in seven fathoms.

Thanks to John Sullivan the last lifeboat whirled away right side up with oars out steadying it before the roaring seas. It made a landing at the National Yacht and Skiff Club’s yard north of the red “back light,” at the west end of the Queen’s Wharf. The clubhouse was at the east end.

Carrying the unconscious cook the shivering shipwrecked succeeded in gaining admission there for Mrs. Callaghan but could not get inside themselves. They were passed a

drink through the window, and told to go and find a hotel. They were taken in and treated well half a mile away at the Mayflower, up Bathurst st. – even if two o'clock in the morning was after closing time. The Mayflower was kept by a publican named Andy, who had taken to heart the advice in the 37th verse of the tenth chapter of Luke.

(To be continued – both the advice and the story).