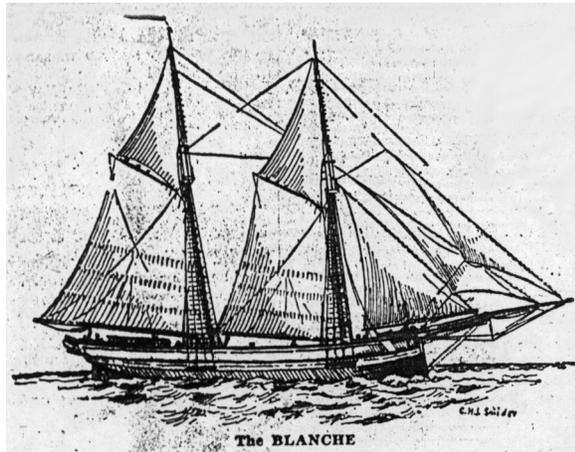


Toronto Telegram, June 6, 1936
Schooner Days, CCXLIII (243)
By C.H.J. Snider

III CAT HOLLOW CAPTAIN'S COMING HOME



STILL other Cat Hollow vessels were the *Katie Eccles* and the *Blanche*, sister schooners of saucy sheer, built at old Mill Point, which became Deseronto. The *Blanche* disappeared with Capt. Johnny Henderson and his Cat Hollow crew, coming from Oswego, coal laden for Brighton, one fine moonlight light, the 27th of May. 1888. They vanished after the *Fleetwing*, Capt. Thomas Matthews, passed them. The *Fleetwing*, outward bound, was shortening down at the time, for the glass was low though the moon was high. Jimmy

Henderson, Capt. John's twin brother, was mate in the *Fleetwing*, and he hailed across the water to "Get ready for something hot, like we're doing." "Oh," returned Johnny, "I've a fair wind and I'll have to make hay while the moon shines." A cloud dimmed the light, the vessels separated, a screaming squall gave the reefed *Fleetwing* all she wanted – and the *Blanche* never came home.

Her empty yawlboat was picked up in June away down the St. Lawrence River, near Cape Vincent, N.Y. in September her young captain's body – he was just twenty-five – floated home to the beach he had left high-heartedly in March, when the pussy willows were putting forth their silver paws. It was so wasted with its lonely journeying that it could only be identified by the woollen socks on the feet.

Capt. Henderson's mother had knitted those socks in the winter. The last glimpse she had of her boy was of him waving them in the parcel she had made as he strode up the hill with his sea-bag on his shoulder, to catch the morning train. He was going to Brighton to fit out the *Blanche* for the season. That was where he had laid her up for the winter. Strange that those weary water-swollen feet should fare unerringly through the weeks and through the waves, back to the mother who had held them against her breast twenty-five years before, and had clothed them for their burial.

The *Fleetwing* was not "Cat Hollow built," but was sailed for many years by Cat Hollow men, Capt. T. Matthews and Capt. Malcolm or "Mac" Shaw. Although the place had many vessels belonging to it they made brief calls in the summer season – and in winter not at all. They laid up at Cobourg to the west or Brighton to the east, where there was shelter from the westerly gales and the ice they brought.



The KATIE ECCLES, sister of the BLANCHE, in the Eastern Gap, Toronto, 1920. Has anyone a photo of the Blanche herself?

vessels lying in uneasy berths at the unprotected piers would cast off and make sail for shelter elsewhere when the peafowls' cries came down the hill. There was no shelter nearer than Presqu'isle, around the corner of Proctor's Point.

Once the Katie Eccles was caught at the pier and could not get away. They scuttled her and let her sit on the bottom, full of water. When the gale was over they pumped her out' and she was none the worse.

Although Lakeport, the post office name of old Cat Hollow, is still the post office address of lake captains and sailors, and on a time as many as sixteen vessels were owned there, few craft bore the inscription "of Lakeport" on the stern. The only one the writer can recall, speaking from fifty years watching the water, was this *Katie Eccles*.

As already said, she was not built in Cat Hollow, but she wore KATIE ECCLES of LAKEPORT on her stern when he first saw her forty years ago. She dragged out an unhappy old age in the stone trade in the 1920's, and came to an end in 1922 between Timber Island and the False Ducks, where she filled, at anchor after her crew abandoned her. It is a pity that our picture shows her in her last days, ragged and drooping, instead of when she was young and strong, for

Lakeport was "no place to lay," as sailors said. They finally got a good big pier, the remains of which are still to be seen, but there was no breakwater and no natural protection from the east, west, or south. The docks were just landing places, for loading cordwood, tanbark, lumber, grain, flour or apples, or unloading coal, but they gave no shelter

Cat Hollow climbed from the lake, by a couple of uncrowded north-and-south streets, between the big white mansion, grain elevator, wharf and warehouse and shipyard of Archibald Campbell, on the southwest, and the other big white mansion of Donald MacTavish, the Hudson's Bay factor, on the northeast. Mr. Campbell was found drowned, on the last rood of his property on the lake shore.

The haughty peacocks which strutted over the lawns of the MacTavish homestead were Cat Hollow sailors' unfailing barometer. Day or night they would scream and clamor against a coming storm so, consistently that

she and the *Blanche* and their "brother," the *William Jamieson* (also built at Mill Point), were three of the smartest-looking fore-and-afters that ever wore gafftopsails.

PASSING HAILS FROM THE ADMIRALTY COURTS

Sir, – I find much of interest in what you published concerning Old Cat Hollow, under the caption of "Schooner Days," in this issue of May 23rd; not the least interesting being the letter sent you from my young brother-in-law, Mr. W. W. D. McGlennon, of the United States Steamship Lines, 19 King street east, concerning the loss of the schooner *Blanche*, recalling, as it did, the thrilling and lamentable lake tragedy of 1888.

For a small unincorporated village for many years, now known as Lakeport, it has produced master mariners and sailors of distinction, among them those mentioned in your article, all of them familiar names, and mostly friends, of years gone by. The name of the port in early days was Port of Cramahe.

These men were almost as well known in my home town of Cobourg as in the place of their birth, as so many of them came frequently into Cobourg waters.

I sailed with Captain Brokenshire in the *Nellie Hunter* – a memorable trip, with Tom Cavanagh, Jim Cashion and Tom Flood, all well known Cobourg sailors of ancient days, visiting Oswego, Hamilton, Port Dalhousie, Port Colborne, Fairport, and Cleveland, on Lake Erie, with cargoes of coal.

I knew well the old pier at Lakeport, alas, little of it left.

I could not refrain from this "passing hail" and hope you may continue these interesting articles.

Yours very truly,
– FRANK M. FIELD.
Ontario District Judge in Admiralty

