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Schooner Days CCXLV (245)
By C.H.J. Snider

OLD CAT HOLLOW AND ITS FORE -'N' - AFTER FLEET

STILL working to windward with the Cat Hollow fleet – there was the *Mary Adelaide*, of Consecon, loaded with 37,000 feet of lumber there for Wellington in 1856; and the scow *Sam Bennet*, of Brighton, which loaded Cat Hollow lumber for the same place in 1861.

The *Billow*, of Brighton, was another fugitive caller at the wharf of Colborne, as the Cat Hollow or Lakeport pier is sometimes called in the harbor entries, “Fugitive” because, as Mr. W.D. McGlennon confirmed in his letter to Schooner Days last week, “Lakeport was no place to lay.” Vessels had to get away if they needed shelter.

Occasional steamers seem to have called; in fact, the old Richelieu and Ontario line side-wheelers, like the *Caspian*, *Passport* and *Magnet*, had a schedule which at times included Cat Hollow – under its official name of Lakeport – up to 1898, and possibly later.

One of the earliest steamer calls recorded is the *Maple Leaf*, of Kingston, 400 tons, which was reported at Wellington “in ballast from Colborne” (which would be Lakeport) in 1856.

There was intense rivalry between the *Magnet* and the *Maple Leaf*, culminating in a lawsuit in 1852, when both these steamers were still almost new. Judgment was given for the *Magnet* on Oct. 23 of that year; and that very day Capt. Neil Wilkinson, of the *Maple Leaf*, died here in Toronto. But for this, of course, neither the court nor Cat Hollow could be blamed.

Highland Scots from the Hebrides who reached Cat Hollow in the early fifties added to the fleet. Donald Connagher built the narrow 72-ton schooner *Thistle*, 82 feet long, 17-foot beam, and 7 feet depth of hold, the crew were bringing her home. They abandoned the wreck and all reached Milford in safety. Some days later, Capt. Wm. Lobb, of Milford, homeward bound from Oswego with a southerly gale behind him, saw the *Jura* sailing all by herself, under bare poles, up the Upper Gap.

She had worked herself off the bar and through the Timber Island passage. She was a good little vessel of 6,000 bushels carrying capacity or more, and rated A-2 for insurance – altogether a great temptation as a salvage job. But it was blowing too hard to lower a boat or get a line on her, and Capt. Lobb and his crew, to their great regret, saw the *Jura* whirl along in erratic circles before the wind, until she drove in on the Gibraltar-like face of Cape Versey, known to sailors and fishermen of Prince Edward County as “The Rock.” Here she beat to pieces. Her maintopmast long served as flagpole for a residence on the top of the cape. It may be there yet, though the wreck occurred fifty years ago.

This vessel was the *Jura* referred to by Mr. McGlennon last week in his story about the young farmer who went to sea in her and had to be told “Gee!” or “Haw!” to get him to put the helm to port or starboard. So many sailors called her the “Jury” that some of the old records

contain her name in that form.

Other Cat Hollow craft were the *Octavia*, about the size of the *Jura*, built in the place in 1866 for Major Joseph Keeler, M.P. for East Northumberland, and called after one of his daughters; and the *Sibylla*, built or rebuilt there in 1871, a larger, deeper schooner. She was 97 feet 7 inches on deck, 22 feet 7 inches beam, 9 feet 1 inch deep in the hold and registered 147 tons. She was rebuilt in Cat Hollow by John Tait from the *Two Brothers*, built at Sorel in 1856 and bought by Major Keeler some years later.

Major Joseph Keeler, third of the name, was the grandson of the original United Empire Loyalist grantee and gander who first came to Colborne from Portland, Vermont, in 1789, and later settled here, bringing in forty families. His son, Joseph, Major Keeler's father, founded the town of Colborne.

There was also the little schooner *Parthenon*, built by Capt. Jas. Andrew in Oakville. She was in the cedar post trade with *Charlotte* out of Cat Hollow, before she was rebuilt at Wellington, "till nothing was left of her but the centerboard and jib boom" as friend Amos Macdonald of Woodrout put it. His father, Robert Macdonald, who had a wharf and storehouse in Little Sandy Bay, performed this major operation, and renamed the transformed *Parthenon* *Robert Macdonald*, after himself. She later became a steamer, and still later - about 1910 - came to a fiery end.

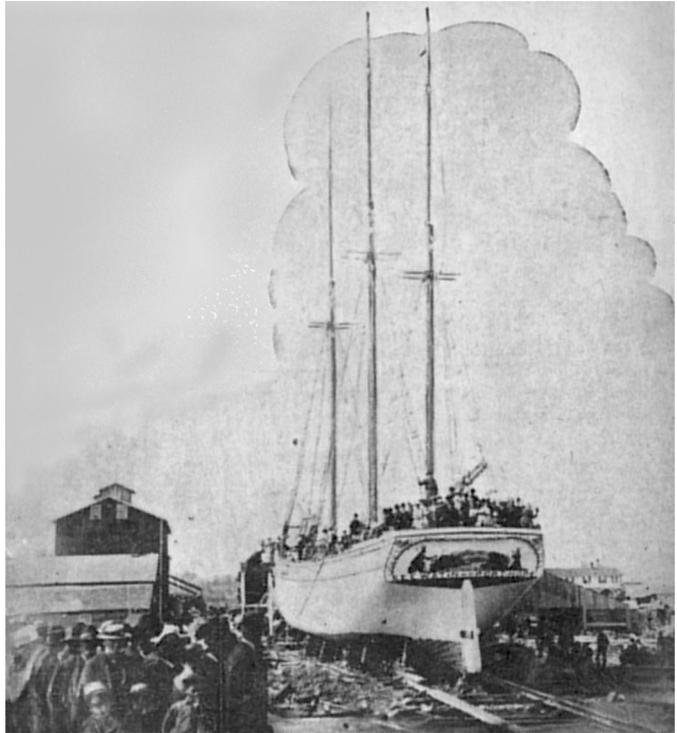
The *Parthenon* was only a small schooner of 100 tons, capable of carrying 3,000 to 4,000 bushels of barley, but this will give an idea of the earning capacity of such vessels. After she was rebuilt and renamed the *Robert Macdonald*, when Capt. Matthews was sailing her, there came the great rush to get grain into the United States before the McKinley tariff of 30 cents a bushel made its importation impossible. Every vessel was crowded to her limit of speed and burden. Capt. Matthews, or his owners, chartered the tug *Charley Ferris* of Oswego and had her tow the *Robert Macdonald* across the lake for two round trips between Oswego and Prince Edward County ports, empty one way and barley laden the other, in order to lose no time through calms or headwinds. The consignees were so anxious to get the barley in for Oswego breweries before the tariff clamped down that they paid a freight which made such two-bills possible. The *Robert Macdonald* earned \$1,000 that last week in October.

But the pride of Cat Hollow was the *Keewatin*, rebuilt there in 1889 by John Tait, Prince Edward County builder, from the hull of the two-masted schooner *Paragon*, one of Lamoree's earlier products built at Oshawa, in 1853. The *Paragon*, by the way, was so named by the late J. O. Guy, secretary of the Harbor Board at Oshawa, and for a long time harbormaster and vessel owner at that port.

The *Keewatin* was larger and longer than her original and had three masts. Her name meant the north wind, and a fine picture of life-sized Indians making medicine to broom forth that desirable breeze decorated her stern. It also showed a boar's head and interlaced branches, insignia of the House of Campbell, Esqr., with wharf and weigh-scales and warehouse and

elevator and family residence in Cat Hollow, was her owner.

In the presence of the great crowd there assembled she stuck on the ways when she was being launched after rebuilding, and she was never a lucky vessel. Her owner, who had lost the unfortunate *Blanche* before rebuilding the *Paragon*, was found drowned on the lake shore. Although the largest Cat Hollow claimed, she was too small to be profitable in the diminished grain trade after the McKinley Bill knocked the barley export in 1891, and her freights on coal cargoes left her "in the hole," for she could only carry 500 tons and required as large a crew as the three-masters with loaded 700 or better. Capt. James Redfearn made the most of her for a long time, and the Elias Rogers Co. here in Toronto employed her for years. Like the *Trade Wind* whose keel Lamoree had also laid, the *Keewatin* had a long life, for it took a Mexican Gulf hurricane to kill her in 1917. She was sold during the Great War, and went south, never to return.



The KEEWATIN, pride of Cat Hollow, on her launching day, July 23rd, 1888. It will be noted that although rebuilt and owned in this port, "of PORT HOPE" was emblazoned on her stern, because that is where she was registered. The old elevator and warehouse may be seen above the heads of the crowd on the wharf – who are, as usual, more interested in the camera than the event. Beyond the vessel may be seen the outlines of the famous Grimes Hotel, of which more next week.