

**Toronto Telegram, August 8, 1936**  
**Schooner Days CCLII (252)**  
**By C.H.J. Snider**

### **The PERSIA and her PET COON**

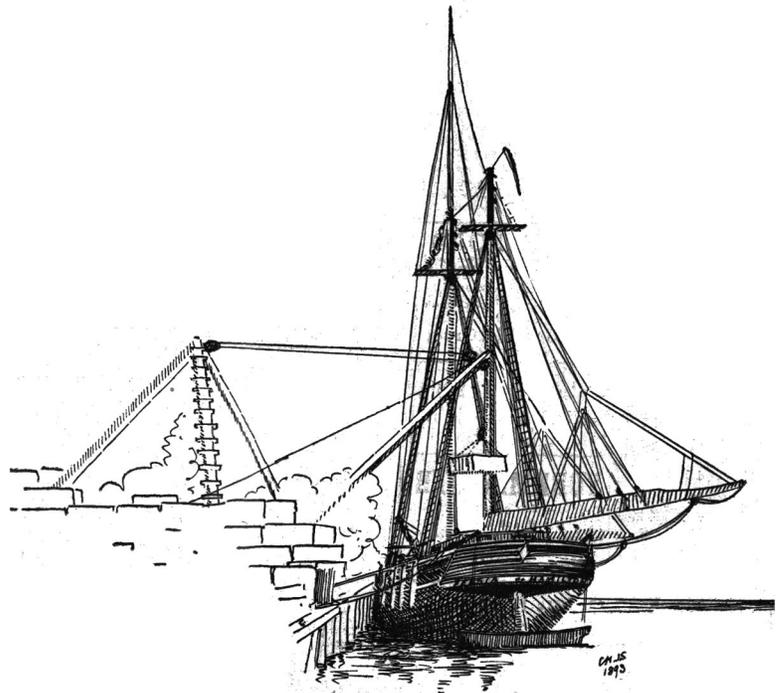
FORTY-FIVE years ago, when the "new" City Hall was building, a big trade was carried on in cut stone. Schooner after schooner swam in from Kelley's Island in Lake Erie or Cleveland, Ohio, with big blocks of sombre red sandstone or grey limestone – the *St. Louis*, and the *Jas. G. Worts*, both owned by Sylvester Bros., the *Van Straubensee*, the *W. J. Suffel*, the *Columbian* and *South, West* and *Arthur* (all three Americans) and, among still others, the *Persia*.

They used, as a rule, to unload at Sylvesters' Wharf at the foot of Church street, where there was a big timber derrick capable of handling the heavy blocks each weighing tons. But the *Arthur* and the *Persia* used to go to Brown and Love's place, just east of the West Market street slip, where there was also a derrick and an extensive stone yard.

The *Persia* was a regular caller there; in fact she never came in with other cargo than stone in her later days, and it was not always cut stone, either. Still, she was not a stonehooker, which classification was reserved for the smaller fry, little scows and schooners which gathered gravel, hardheads, cribstone, pavers and building stone along the beaches.

The *Persia* was a stone carrier which was different, loading her cargo in one port and another, for a freight rate of so much a ton. The stonehookers got their cargoes by the sweat of their backs, and sold them by the toise. Freights did not interest them.

In those "new" City Hall days the *Persia* was a chunky schooner of particularly dingy aspect, for with the exception of one thin white stripe she was painted black all over, even to her mastheads and peak-halliard blocks; and for years she went without a maintopmast, a spar whose absence makes the best of vessels look draggle-tailed. She had been built in Hamilton in 1867, and Robert Baldwin, of Toronto, was her registered owner in 1874. She was a short deep vessel,



*The Persia of Hamilton loading stone. C.H.J. Snider, 1893*

99 feet 6 inches long, 22 feet beam, and 10 feet 6 inches depth of hold. She was 196 tons register. She had a slightly curved stemhead which dubiously justified calling her clipper-bowed.

This compiler's clearest recollection of her is the little pet raccoon that used to scramble around her deck. He was chained to a light wooden pail, which kept him from climbing the rigging, but did not prevent his free rambling about below. He was quite clever at up-ending the pail and crawling into it for a sleep. He was a merry little black-masked bandit and a great thief of the crew's apples.

The *Persia* sails back through the years through Mr. W. R. Phillimore's letter, quoted in part in *Schooner Days* last week, and sifting what became of her. Mr. Phillimore, it will be remembered, began by telling of his experiences in the old Oakville schooner *Canadian*, which had a Bay of Quinte captain whose navigation was of that casual order that he sighted Fairport, Ohio, when he expected to see the Dummy on the Ontario shore of Lake Erie, and the *Canadian* wound up in Buffalo when she was bound for Port Colborne. She did not remain in Buffalo, however, and here we resume Mr. Phillimore's narrative.

"The next day, with the wind from the nor'-nor'-west, we got out, and, it coming on to blow hard, we nearly ran past Port Colborne again. We then canalled down the Welland to Lake Ontario, our load of hard-gathered grain being consigned to Kingston.

"Leaving Port Dalhousie, it blew hard from the west and the mate and I again took trick and trick about all the way down Lake Ontario to Kingston—and I now come to the *Persia*.

"Her captain, whose name I have forgotten, came aboard in Kingston looking for a man, one good at the wheel, and the captain of the *Canadian* advised me to take the berth as he expected to lay up for the winter. I did so, and we hauled to the penitentiary to load stone for Toronto. As was the practice then, with a cargo of a dead weight in the bottom of the hold, we placed part of the load along the bulwarks on deck, and but for that this letter would not have been written.

"Outside we battled around the lower end of the lake for a couple of days, then ran west with a stiff easterly wind, quite a sea having kicked up by the time we were off Scarboro Bluffs about eight in the morning. I went down to breakfast, and in a few minutes heard slatting of the mainsail, and by the time I was on deck again the wind had hauled right around to the west and came on to blow hard. We hauled on the wind, but made bad work of it in the heavy sea that was making. In sight of Toronto we turned and ran before the wind, hoping to make Port Hope or Darlington, but reaching there, could not attempt to enter the narrow piers of either place.

"We were soon running before a gale and under bare poles. The staysail which we set to help steer and keep away from following seas, rolling like mountains behind us, was soon in ribbons. By late afternoon it was the biggest sea I ever saw on any of the lakes. The main gaff topsail broke adrift and was torn in strips, the cracking like a battery of guns. To avoid bolt ropes and strips of sail fouling our mainsail halyards, which we might later require to use, two of us spent a pleasant hour aloft. You know what it is maybe, to skin away scraps and shreds of torn

canvas from ropes around which they have wrapped themselves in a November gale, sixty or seventy feet above the water.

"We were better off than those on deck, for she wallowed in water, great seas flooding the deck, and though we knocked away the bulwarks, she would shiver under the load. Then came an order to throw overboard the deck cargo, and while two men had carried most of the large stones aboard at Kingston, the largest were now picked up by every man, eager to get them over, and there were narrow escapes from going over ourselves. But she was more lively after that, though hard to steer, and we took half-hour tricks at the wheel through the night, several times nearly broaching to, and reached back to Kingston in the morning.

"We could, of course, have run under Long Point or the Ducks, but the yawl boat on the stern had been lost and everything movable washed overboard, and I think the captain had enough. It was along in November. She laid up there and I never heard of her again, I giving up the water in the fall of 1880 for other pursuits.

"My last trip was in a big upper laker, the *Negaunee*, early in December, from Buffalo to Chicago, and she went down with all hands coming back on the eastward trip, I having gone over to another ready to sail. Some friends who had been neighbors in the home town, and who knew that I had been on the *Negaunee*, wrote home when the report of her loss appeared in the paper, asking that the news be broken to my mother, and the lady going on that sympathetic errand received quite a shock at finding me standing with my back to the stove in the living room.

"But I fear I am wearying you. Age has its compensation, not the least of which is reminiscences.

“Very truly,  
“W. R. PHILLIMORE.”

By no means, Mr. Phillimore, do you weary us. Such reminiscences are noble compensation for the exactions of time. We promised to tell what happened to the *Persia* ultimately, and here it is: in the winter of 1893-4 she was thoroughly overhauled, even, we believe, to the extent of having her maintopmast restored, and in the spring of the latter year she blossomed forth like a lily of the field, all white and green in new paint. But alas, such finery seemed too much for the erstwhile dingy stone carrier. On her way up the lake with another cargo for Brown and Love's dock she opened up and went down off Long Point. Her crew escaped in the yawl boat, and so did the pet raccoon.

## **PASSING HAILS**

### **THE ALEMBIC RIG**

Sir,—Pictures of the "*Alembic*" have appeared in The Telegram recently and I have noticed that in, the description of this vessel she is repeatedly called a "Topsail Schooner."

This is decidedly incorrect. A topsail schooner carries no foresail but. is simply a schooner carrying sails on her foremast. The *Alembic* carries a foresail as well as topsails which

makes the vessel a barquentine. A full-rigged sailing vessel is square rigged on all three masts, a barque is square-rigged on the fore and main with fore and aft sails on the mizzen, and a barquentine is square-rigged on the fore only with fore and aft sails on the main and mizzen. This latter is how the *Alembic* is rigged. I am sure the builders at Newcastle-on-Tyne never called her a “topsail schooner.”

A. K. LONG,  
9 Marion st.. Toronto.

Sorry to insist that they were wrong if they didn't, brother, for the *Alembic* was a topsail schooner and not a barquentine.

The barquentine, as you say, is square-rigged on the foremast, and her foremast is usually in three sections, lower-mast, topmast, and topgallant mast, with one or more square sails on each, and no gaff-and-boom sails between the foremast and mainmast, except in rare instances, a fore trysail, a low sail for storm use. That is not how the *Alembic* was rigged. Her foremast was in two parts, lower-mast and topmast, schooner fashion, and she had a gaff-and-boom foresail, as lofty as any other schooner's. She had also a squaresail on the fore yard. This is quite usual with topsail schooners, but it did not make her a barquentine. We had dozens of topsail schooners on the lakes similarly rigged. They were often called “barques,” as an abbreviation for barquentines. We also had many real barquentines, and the difference between the two rigs was noticeable. Topsail schooners certainly carried square foresails in addition to their gaff foresails, from the time of the *Nancy* onwards, as references in the logbook of that vessel in 1813 prove.

COMPILER OF SCHOONER DAYS.

## **DOWN TO DINGHIES**

Mr. J. Hilton writes Schooner Days on the subject of plans for a fourteen-foot standard dinghy. Our old friend Tom Turrall, of the National Yacht Club, could tell him what he wishes to know.