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**Schooner Days CCXCI (291)**  
**By C.H.J Snider**

## **GETTING A DUSTING OFF DUNKIRK**

HERE is a sample from the gallery in the office of John S. Parson's ship chandlery store at Oswego:

A two-masted schooner tossing wildly, with both anchor chains leading out bar-hard ahead of her, in a short hollow angry sea. She seems to have just let go her anchors, for her lower sails are still up, slatting and thrashing like kettledrums.

She has been through heavy punishment. Her jibboom and a couple of jibs have been carried away, loose and broken rigging is whipping in the wind, one davit has been snapped, and her yawlboat is hanging upended from the other. The eightsided hawserbox and big galley scuttle-butt have been washed overboard, and she must have shipped so much water that she was in danger of foundering, for ragged holes showing fresh splintered wood have been knocked in her bulwarks to free her.

Nevertheless the artist, one of the Barkers of Oswego, has taken pains to record her paint, spick and span, and in detail. Her mastheads, doublings, gaffs and booms are pure white, her topsides are white, picked out with green covering board and red beading, her underbody is in a neat blue-grey leadcolor, the light-screen in her port rigging is bright red, and the name and decorations on the lost water barrel and hawserbox are carefully reproduced amid the waves which are whirling them away. Enough of the quarter bulwarks has been spared to leave the name "FRANK D. BARKER" prominent as in life.

"She was an Oswego vessel," explains Mr. Parsons, "sailed by Capt. Jim Scott, from the Highlands. She got a dusting on Lake Erie, and the picture shows her riding out the gale at anchor off Dunkirk, N.Y. She came through all right."

Another picture on the wall is that of the *Clayton Belle*, built at Clayton, of course, for Fowler and Esseltyn in 1863 by John Oades, at a cost of \$16,500. She was sunk in collision ten miles from Port Huron, in 1882, and four of her crew were drowned. She is shown with her white paint very white, as skippers like to think their vessels looked. The little dots down her headstays probably indicate her white painted jib-hanks, which in her day were hoops of tough wood, neatly bent and fastened by notching the ends. They were larger than the iron hanks later used to fasten the jibs to the stays. They were used before wire replaced standing rigging of a tarred rope; the wooden hanks were easier on the hempen stays.

Here's another, a photograph of the Toronto yacht Aileen in a race in 1882. It probably came through Mr. Parsons' friend, John T. Mott, of Oswego, colonel and commodore and most ancient of American yachtsmen, who died only last year, well on in his eighties. His family were shipowners, and his pleasure yacht was the yawl *Papoose*. The Motts had the schooners *Thos. S.*

*Mott, John T. Mott, Bermuda, Bahama, Henry Fitzhugh, Pulaski, Nassau, James Navagh and Atlanta*; the last named lost with all hands in Lake Michigan.

The Aileen photograph is one of those careful groups done by professional photographers like Gagen and Fraser or their contemporary, Bruce, of Toronto, fifty years ago; the background was carefully drawn in wash, then the figures, photographed individually in different poses, were clipped out and pasted on, and then the whole thing rephotographed, making a very realistic picture. Major Fred Manley is shown hauling – not very convincingly, it must be confessed – on the fall of the weather backstay. Despite his occupation and the jersey and tuque, then affected by yachtsmen, he is wearing the smile of academic calm which befitted his life ashore, which he passed five days a week in the Old Grammar School, just then becoming known as Jarvis Street Collegiate Institute.

One of the professional crew, Saunders, is shown next him standing up with arms akimbo and staring self-consciously at the Horizon – something never allowed aboard the Aileen or in any other yacht in a race as tight as this one. They have just nipped around the buoy, with another cutter right on the Aileen's tail. There is good action and character in the next four figures – two Gooderhams, Horace and Albert; A. B. Lee and J. C. Kemp, who are walking in the main-sheet. Scotch cap, tuque, pillbox with a flat peak, beards and side-whiskers are characteristic of the yachtsmen of the time. The faces and pose of Mr. W. G. Gooderham and Mr. Chris Henderson, above the skylight and binnacle, are excellent, and so, too, is the portrait of Mr. John Leys, steering from the lee-scuppers on one knee where he can watch the headsails, with a relieving whip and pennant on the long racing tiller. Mr. Leys was one of the owners of the *Aileen* at this time, but she was for years owned and sailed by the late Mr. W. G. Gooderham, son of the early commodore of the Royal Canadian Yacht Club and father of the recent one, Mr. Norman R. Gooderham. Mr. W, G. Gooderham and Mr. Leys were joint owners at the time the picture was taken.

*(Caption) SCHOONER "FRANK D. BARKER" RIDING IT OUT.*

*(Caption) THE LOST "CLAYTON BELLE."*

*(Caption) YACHTSMEN IN THE 1880's WERE STERN AND SIDE-WHISKERED – THESE WERE ALL WELL-KNOWN TORONTO RESIDENTS*