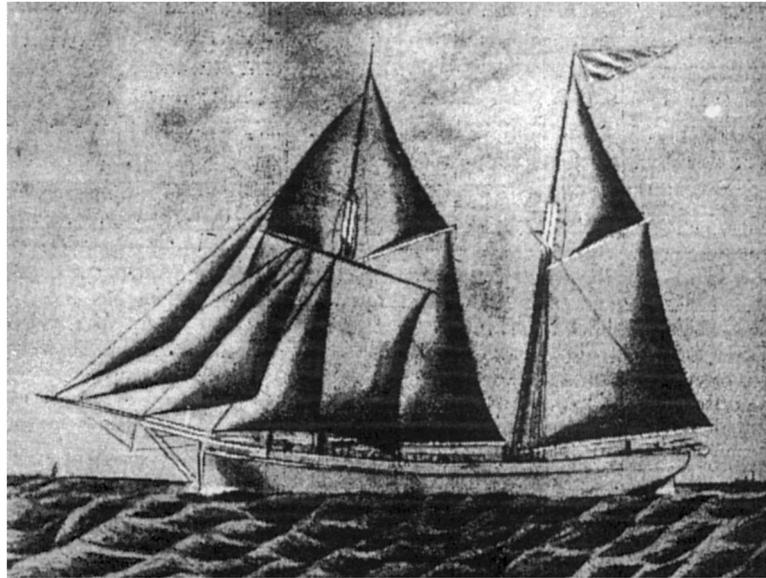


Toronto Telegram, May 22, 1937
Schooner Days, CCXCIII (293)
by C. H. J. Snider

And only the dog came home

Drawn 60 years ago in crayon is a picture of Parson's ship chandlery store at Oswego of the schooner *Gilbert Molison*, straight of stem and tall of spar, white, two masted, and typical of the American vessel of her time. She was lost some ten miles off Oswego in 1876, as mentioned last week. Friend Parson says she was very much like another Oswego schooner, the *I.G. Jenkins* whose disappearance in the same vicinity as the *Molison*, the year earlier, gave currency to the established superstition of the Great Lakes, the "Black Dog of Lake Erie."



Ghost of a ghost ship - the Gilbert Molison, declared to be "very like" the schooner I.G. Jenkins lost last year before her near Oswego, in circumstances which gave rise to one of the Great Lakes ghost stories.

The Black Dog story has been given before in *Schooner Days*, but the *Jenkins* part of it will stand repeating. She was a stout clean white fore-and -after and was bound down for Oswego from Lake Erie in November, 1875, with a cargo of grain.

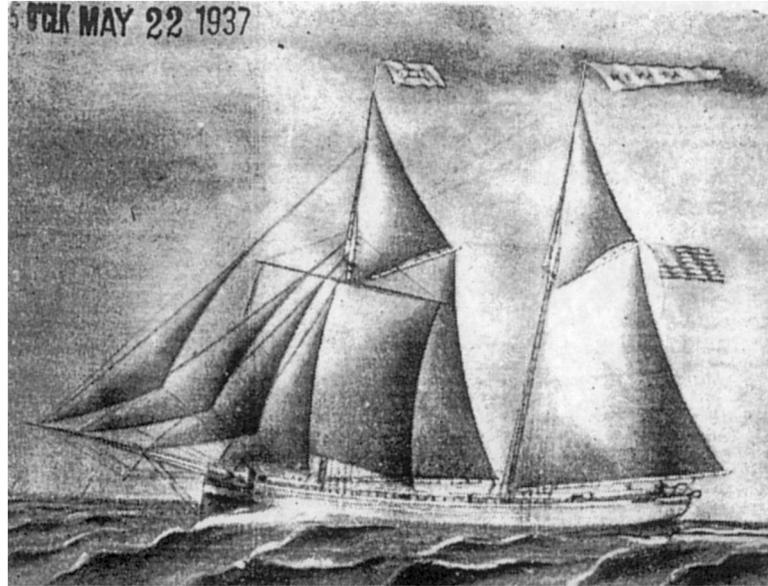
When she reached Port Colborne one of her crew quit. He followed her all the way down the Welland Canal, refueling at every bar-room along the towpath, and always telling the same tale. When he was at the wheel one calm moonlight night in Lake Erie he had seen a large black dog climb up over her rail from the water, walk across the moonlit deck "as plain as day," climb the rail on the opposite side, and vanish into the lake. The captain had his own pet dog on board, but the sailor insisted, this phantom hound was not he, because the captain's dog was still on board after the ghost dog had vanished over the rail.

It had been vouchsafed to this poor seer, probably a victim of cornjuice, that this was a warning that the vessel would be lost, with all hands. That, he repeated, was why he left her when she got to Port Colborne. He kept following her down the canal, tearfully urging his shipmates to do likewise; Capt. John Brown finally set the living dog on him to get rid of him.

The *Jenkins* reached Port Dalhousie and towed out at once into Lake Ontario to prevent desertions and to take advantage of the fair southwest wind that would waft her into Oswego within

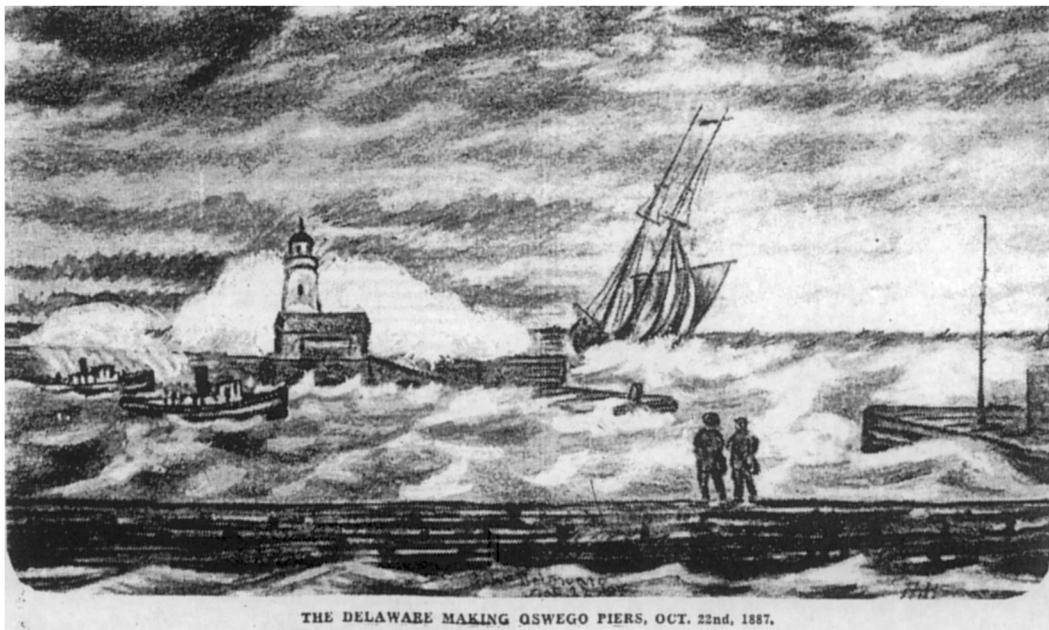
twenty-four hours. She left in such haste that her jib-boom was still topped up and her boat davits swung in, as was the custom when shortening up to get through the canal locks. It was not unusual for vessels to leave in this trim, and rig out on the run down if the wind was fair.

It came on to blow that night, and the wind veered from southwest to west and northwest. By next morning the sea was running mountainously off the port. The *Sam Cook* and the *Nevada* – her picture is on the wall too, a green and white four-jibber – got in by the skin of their teeth. This *Nevada* was lost later in Lake Erie. She and the *Jamaica* had been built side by side in Oswego, at the height of the building boom. They cost \$60,000 and had to do some heavy carrying to pay dividends on the investment.



The Nevada came in that morning after the Jenkins was lost.

It was probably such a morning as is depicted in another striking picture in John S. Parson's collection the Canadian schooner *Delaware* reeling in after breaking the jaws of her fore gaff; at least the picture seems to show the spar jumped across the mast, and the schooner having a wild time, on the 22nd of October 1887. Capt. Bob Bartley, who always wore a watch-chain like a bower-cable across his waistcoat, was sailing her then. The *Delaware* was originally the *David Andrews*, and was wrecked and renamed at Oswego some years before this incident.



THE DELAWARE MAKING OSWEGO PIERS, OCT. 22nd, 1887.

The brigantine *Montcalm* couldn't make Oswego with the *Sam Cook* and the *Nevada*, and ran down the lake, and into the St. Lawrence, and fetched up at Cape Vincent. Her captain reported that he had been in company with the *I.G. Jenkins* as far as Thirty Mile Point, but had lost touch with her when the gale struck.

She never arrived. They watched and waited for her and other Oswego vessels, for the canal was crowded with the down-bound lake fleet. They sent tugs up the lake when the gale abated. The tug went all the way to Port Dalhousie and there found the rest of the fleet windbound. The breeze had fallen light and ahead after the gale the other schooners waited for weather. Some were towed home by the Oswego tugs, some sailed.

A black dog came ashore up to Sheldon's Point some miles to the westward of Oswego. He was a strange dog, the farmer noted, and he seemed all in. His hair stuck to his sides as if glued there and he dragged his hind legs as though paralyzed. It was days before he was brought to town, and then he was recognized as Capt. John Brown's dog from the *Jenkins*.

This poor brute was all trace ever found of the *Jenkins* and her crew of seven. It was supposed that, running before gale with the sails on the port side, she got in under the land, in the effort to avoid jibing over, as the wind hauled to the westward, and that so she had struck on the Ford shoals, four miles above the port. Here the *Twilight* and the *Vienna* and the *Agnes Hope* and many another vessel had got aground. The first two were got off. The *Agnes Hope* of Hamilton, sailed by Capt. James Savage of Picton, had been abandoned in a sinking condition by her crew before she drove in on the shoal and broke up. If the Ford shoal so near Oswego was the scene of the *Jenkins'* end, it is strange that no wreckage from her was washed in around her home port.

The Black Dog of Lake Erie was believed (by some lake sailors) to be the ghost of a Newfoundland who had perished in the Welland Canal. He was knocked overboard from the vessel to which he belonged while she was locking through, and left to drown in the lock by a cruel crew who jeered at him for being from salt water and reputed to be such a good swimmer. Surely, they said, a little canal water couldn't hurt him.

Poor Newfy's first revenge was to seal his vessel tight in the lock, so that the crew broke their backs heaving her out with the capstan when the lock filled. She was a close fit for the sides, as many of those Old Canallers were, and the body of the drowned dog jammed in behind the lock gates so that they could not open properly. Afterwards ill-luck followed the schooner, like the Ancient Mariner's Albatross. How the crew expiated their offense is not known – unless they all went to the bottom with her – but the story grew of this poor dead Newfoundland coming up over the rail of any ship which he chose to haunt, walking across the deck and disappearing over the side. Sure portent of disaster. Why he chose Lake Erie for his spiritual reappearances instead of the Welland Canal is something the superstitious never explained.