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Schooner Days XL (40)
By C.H.J. Snider

The Sailing EXPRESS WAGON

There was, indeed, another Sea Gull frequenting Toronto Harbor, quite as industrious as the brigantine Sea Gull which made the voyage to South Africa, and brought back the famous sample of Durban rum – but very, very much smaller. Here is her story, and the story of some of the chicks she hatched.

THE other *Sea Gull* was a chunky little square-sterned open boat, 30 feet long. She was schooner rigged, after the mackinaw type, although her foremast was not crowded so far into the eyes of her. She had a bowsprit square as a scantling, and about as graceful; and she was painted black.

Capt. Joe Goodwin and his boys had her. She was a Toronto institution from the 1880's onward. Every spring, about this time or a little later, Captain Joe advertised in the daily papers that "The Old Reliable *Sea Gull*" was ready to do business again moving island freight and furniture; goods called for and delivered; first-class care taken of groceries and shopping purchases.

The *Sea Gull*, manned or rather "boyed" by the rising generation of Goodwins, represented the marine section of a Goodwin transportation enterprise. Capt. Joe in person supervised the shore division of the organization, the plant of which consisted of one hay-burning express wagon of 1 h.p. Capt. Joe collected the freight anywhere in the city and piloted it to the waterfront. The boys did the rest. The side of the Goodwin wagon and the mainsail of the *Sea Gull* each bore the legend "Goodwin's Island Express."

Many a Toronto family patronized the *Sea Gull*, entrusting to her their Lares and Penates twice a year, spring and fall. With her shallow draft (she was, of course, a centreboarder) she could go where none of the island ferry steamers could venture. Almost anywhere there was



THE OTHER "SEA GULL" with a typical cargo. Island bound wing-on-wing of a summer's day in the 1880s.

enough water to wet the sand, she would deliver cottagers' camp-beds, cookstoves, chairs, tables, kitchen supplies, hammocks, ice, artichokes, flower-boxes, cordwood and the family cat.

The *Sea Gull* was aided in her island deliveries by a tin lifeboat which the Goodwin boys had dug out of the sand long after its superannuation. Keeping this ironclad afloat was as great a feat as any Jellicoe achieved at Jutland, but the boys used her for the shoal and sheltered waters inside the encircling arm of Toronto Island. She was very handy for supplying fertilizers for island flower beds.

The *Sea Gull* was reserved for more daring commerce. She would deliver anything anywhere and always in A1 condition. If she couldn't reach the required spot by navigating Blockhouse Bay past Mugg's Landing and up the Long Pond she would sail around by the lake side, and push an adventurous rounded forefoot up on the sandy beach, or moor to the breakwater. Joe Goodwin's boys would hop out bare legged and carry the whole cargo to its ultimate objective.

"Never disappoint a customer," was Captain Joe's maxim, and he pounded it into the heads and hearts of his husky young sons with the *Sea Gull's* tiller.

The foot of Church street was her favorite loading place for freight. The Sylvester Brothers, jolly old captains who owned a fleet of big schooners and the wharf and the warehouse, and the derrick that unloaded the brown stone from Kelley's Island for the Parliament Buildings and the City Hall, looked with a lenient eye upon Captain Joe and his kids when they would moor the *Sea Gull* at the mouth of the slip. Captain Sol and Captain Dave Sylvester usually forgot to collect wharfage charges. Over at the Island Wm. Ward's dock was a favorite roosting place for the *Sea Gull*. Jeffery Foote, the Royal Canadian Yacht Club secretary, shortened his summers by shooing her unyachty presence away from the club pier.

Those were good old days, when the "foot of Church street," now a concrete subway and an acreage of empty factory sites, was choked with the Sylvester's schooners, and their great green steam barge *Shickluna*, with a foresail so black with coal dust it looked like crape.

The *Sea Gull* docked on the east side of the slip. The smaller steam ferries for the Island, the *John Hanlan*, *Truant*, *Jessie L. McEdwards*, *Kathleen*, *Arlington*, *Mascotte*, *Luella* and *Gertrude*, all landed and loaded passengers on the west side of this crowded alley. The *Mayflower* and the *Primrose* docked further west, and Brock street, at the foot of Spadina avenue, had a ferry service, too.

There was also a ferry service from the foot of Parliament street; and steamers ran up the Don, and to the Exhibition and to the Humber. People believed in waterways. Horseless carriages had not been dreamed of, and a dozen public boathouses rented skiffs for rowing on the Bay. That was the favorite pastime of a summer afternoon.

Mugg's Landing, on the island, was then newly named. Do you know why? Very early in the gay nineties, Mugg's Landing was a popular melodrama of the old Jacobs and Sparrow's Opera House, preceding the Toronto, hard by the Grand. Muggs was the heroine; an early

variant of the good little tough girl. Memory does not recall much more of her than a snub nose and a hole in her stockings. Mugg's and her Landing were highly popular with theatre-goers, and early pioneers of summer camp possibilities of the island gave the name of the play to their spot in the sun some time before the replicas of the Columbian caravels called in on their way to the World Fair in Chicago of 1893.

There is a moral in these rambling reminiscences of the smaller *Sea Gull*, as there is in the enterprise of the larger vessel which Capt. Frank Jackman took out to Africa and back. Both were symptomatic of the era when fathers expected to work hard for a decent livelihood, and sons expected to follow them and did so.

Capt. Joe Goodwin did well with his Island Express. Ere he died, a prosperous and respected citizen, he had owned a small fleet of harbor tugs and island ferry steamers – the *Nelly Bly*, the *Snow Storm*, the *Sylvester Neelon*, the *Joe Goodwin*, the *Ada Alice*, and the *National*. His boys, Joe Junior, Jimmy and Willie, grew up into fine upstanding men. They are a credit to their native city, where they still reside.

Dredging of the island lagoons made them available for the fireboat – the enterprising Capt. Goodwin supplied the first city fire tug – and for steam freighters, and took away the *Sea Gull*'s trade. Last glimpse of her was when this century was new, and some young fellows had bought her and turned her into a yacht – thereby fulfilling a schoolboy ambition which had tormented the writer a dozen years earlier. They were trying to sail her out of the Eastern Gap wing-and-wing with a soldier's wind; and the little *Sea Gull*, knowing better than they did, wouldn't go.

She was broken up soon afterwards. In her lifetime she carried more household goods and pets to the island than the ark took to Ararat.