

**Toronto Telegram, August 23, 1941**  
**Schooner Days DIX (509)**  
**By C.H.J. SNIDER**

### **Round-Sterned ENTERPRISE**

LATE in the fall of 1882 the round-sterned schooner *Enterprise* of Port Hope – always so described, to distinguish her from another *Enterprise* with the usual square transom-stern – left Oswego, light, for another load of Prince Edward County barley.

The barley trade for the Oswego breweries was the big industry in the county then, Prince Edward grain combined with New York State water with happy results for the brewers, and every fall schooners made money rushing the season's harvest across the lake. Rates were so good that they would not wait to load coal or coarse freight for the return voyage, preferring to go back flying light for another whack at the profitable barley. At 6 cents a bushel, the *Enterprise* would earn \$400 by one cargo. Oswego was, under good conditions, an easy daylight run from Prince Edward, though of course gales, calms, snowstorms and headwinds might spin the trip out into a month.

This round-sterned *Enterprise* was built in Port Hope in 1855, the last year of the Crimean War, by Wm. Manson, and was 90 feet long, 17 feet beam, and 8 feet 8 inches deep in the hold. Her registered tonnage appears as 91 tons in the last document regarding her extent. Earlier, in 1874, when J. H. Way of Whitby was her registered owner, it was recorded as 105 tons. Still earlier, when Robert Thomas enrolled her in his list of Great Lakes shipping in 1864, and Hargraft and Butler of Cobourg were her owners, it was 118 tons; proving that registered tonnage is an elastic description.

In 1882 the *Enterprise* was commanded by Capt. Daniel O'Hagan, an experienced mariner whose wake was dogged by misfortune. He had a good mate in Edward Rorke of Cherry Valley, who had a long and prosperous career in Canadian and American schooners, both on Lake Ontario and the Upper Lakes.

The *Enterprise* sailed at eight o'clock in the morning on Nov. 23, with a fair wind. She was bound for a dangerous coast, for the west shore of Prince Edward County, exposed to the full fury of fall gales, had no shelter to offer except the difficult natural harbor of Weller's Bay at the northerly end, or the dubious lee of Nicholson's Island under the Scotch Bonnet. The thriving town of Wellington, from which much grain was shipped, could have had a splendid harbor of refuge had proper piers and breakwaters been provided, and dredging been done to deepen the large inland lake lying behind it. But this was too large an undertaking for the municipality or the county, and the Dominion Government never got around to it until the barley trade was gone.

Yet private wharves thrust out from the stony shores around Wellington above the Picton Sandbanks, and bursting grain storehouses were relieved of their crammed contents by schooners like the *Enterprise*, daring the perils of the rocky lee shore, where dozens of vessels had

perished.

There was a blue clay bar somewhere off Wellington which some of the captains could find with their eyes shut, and here they could ride out a moderate gale at straining anchors when the lying was so rough alongside the wharves that wharf and warehouse were likely to be battered down if the schooner's lines held and she herself did not fall into staves. Capt. Duetta, with the *Kate* of Oakville, rode out many a gale this way, and Capt. Billy Lobb, who took the last grain cargo out of Wellington in the *Highland Beauty* in 1901, had traded for years to these perilous parts without mishap. But – every vessel which went there had to cut and run at some time or other, and many of them had to make three or four attempts to finish their loading when weather conditions suited.

The *Enterprise* was to load at McDonald and Hyatt's wharf at West Point, below Wellington, on Little Sandy Bay, north of Wicked Point. She reached there at 4 o'clock that November afternoon, with the wind light from the east – ideal conditions for loading, for with the offshore wind Lake Ontario was as smooth as a millpond, even on this open shore. They dropped an anchor as they were coming in and paid out cable until she reached the wharf and they got her lines on it. Then, apparently, they carried out another anchor, a kedge, to breast her off from the wharf, and at once began to load.

Without stopping work for supper the barley was poured into her forward hatch, wheelbarrows supplementing the efforts of the grain spout to cram her. It was only when the wind began to pipe up after dark, coming in fresh from the southward at half past eight, that they took the long overdue precaution of trying to level the load and distribute it so that the vessel would be on an even keel and able to sail. As she was so much down by the head, with all her cargo forward, that she could not answer her helm and could not rise to the sea.

It was useless to try to heave off and pick up the blue clay bar in the dark, or to run for Presqu'isle, the best shelter available.

While they were trimming the grain aft the wind worked into the southwest and great breakers rolled in. She pitched and heaved and strained on the lines holding her to the wharf until she parted them, one by one. By eleven o'clock the last one went, and all that was holding the schooner was her anchors. An old marine "protest," signed by Capt. O'Hagan the following day in the presence of Edward Merrill, notary public, of Picton, says, rather lamely, "After the gale had sprung up from the southwest we held a consultation and decided that our only chance of saving the vessel was by hanging on to the anchor and lines as long as possible, and that if we had attempted to get her away under canvas it would have put her ashore at once."

That is all very true, for the vessel could not sail at all, practically standing on her head with her cargo all forward. It is also very true that it is easy to criticize from the safe distance of a hundred miles and sixty years from the place and time, what other men did and left undone in an emergency, but the handling of the emergency does seem to have been unheroic. "About eleven o'clock she parted her lines, and then we got ashore in a yawl boat."

Abandoned thus by her crew, the vessel “hung to her anchor till between two and three o’clock in the morning of the 24th, when she dragged ashore on the rocks and into a position where she is likely to become a total wreck.”

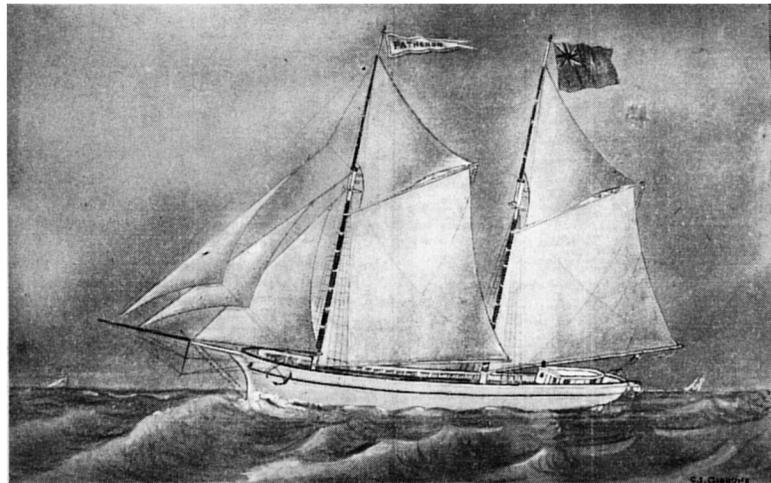
It is no use arguing now about what might have been then, but since the crew were able to make a landing in their yawl boat one wonders whether an anchor and chain on to the wharf itself would not have held her until she pulled the storehouse out by the roots. From the fact that she eventually dragged away from the wharf on to the rocks it is evident that the sea was not pounding her against the wharf. Perhaps they had no more chain and could not get their kedge back.

Or they might have scuttled her while she was still fast to the wharf, as Capt. Henry W. Jackman, of Toronto had done two years previously when caught at Wellington in a similar predicament, his vessel partly unloaded of her coal cargo and unmanageable. A couple of auger holes in her bottom let in enough water to bring her down till she settled firmly on the sand. The *Parthenon* survived the gale, and was later rebuilt and renamed the *Robert McDonald*, after one of the wharf-owning families.

To have scuttled the *Enterprise* would have damaged what barley was in her, and the barley might have swelled and burst her open, as happened to the *Highland Beauty* eventually at Cape Vincent. Undoubtedly Capt. O’Hagan used his best judgment – but this was the end of the round-sterned *Enterprise*, she broke up where she lay.

ANCHOR salvaging continues to be an interesting summer pastime. The latest Schooner Days has heard of is a 200-pounder discovered last month by Miss Marjorie Orrell of Ottawa while sailing off Lakeland, a Prince Edward County summer resort, and recovered by the exercise of considerable ingenuity on the part of Mr. Earl Checkley of Ottawa, a senior executive of the Metropolitan Life, who summers at that salubrious spot.

Willis Metcalfe, on whose farm at Point Traverse, at the opposite end of the county, the cook of the *Maggie Hunter* was buried sixty or seventy years ago, told Schooner Days of the find and asked for information about the schooner *Enterprise*, to which the anchor was supposed to



*The PARTHENON, from a crayon drawing by C.I. GIBBONS. This is not Gibbons at his best. His depiction of the foremast is out-of-drawing. The misspelling of the name on the burgee, the shortness of the doubling of the masthead, the height of the fore gaff, which seems to have carried away the triatic stay, and the length of the foreboom, and the scarcity of mast hoops will be pounced on by the critics.*

have belonged.

Mr. Metcalfe has an interesting collection of historical material at Point Traverse. He says that Amos McDonald, late warden of Prince Edward County Council, is sure the anchor recovered is the long buried kedge, or smaller anchor, of the schooner *Enterprise*, for where it was found is the site of a well-known loading place on the exposed western shore of Prince Edward County in the days of the grain trade – none other than McDonald and Hyatt's wharf of 1882. Norman McDonald of the same clan is placing the kedge on the lawn of Lakeland as a memorial.

Willis Metcalfe has a plain white cross marking the almost forgotten grave of the almost forgotten cook, whose drowned body, washed up on the False Ducks months after the *Maggie Hunter* sailed from Oswego, was the only evidence of the lake mystery which enveloped the ship and her whole company. Schooner Days has endeavored to identify the woman who lost her life in this humble tragedy; the names of the others of the crew are known, but there seems to be some doubt as to whether the cook was Miss Eliza Kennedy of Kingston or Miss Ellen or Eliza Cook. If any reader knows will he please communicate the information to Schooner Days?