

Toronto Telegram, June 11, 1932
Schooner Days, LI (51)
By C.H.J. Snider

Braving the Briny

This world is getting smaller and smaller. Only last month we had the steamer Grenland, of Skien, Norway, at Hamilton, with coal, seventeen days out from Wales, and clearing for Detroit, to load pitch for France.

Ten years ago the steamer Torhamvan inaugurated a service between Hamilton, Toronto and Vancouver, via the Panama Canal. In the middle of May this year the steamship Rosebank arrived with British Columbia salmon and B. C. timber for the Toronto Terminal Warehouse, thirty-six days after leaving Vancouver. She later cleared with 600 tons of general cargo for the Pacific province.

Lake navigation by ocean-going steamers is no new thing, but it will surprise some to learn that in the brave days of sail many lake schooners crossed the Atlantic, and some went around the Horn and the Cape of Good Hope.

A Montreal despatch of May 7th spoke with awe of the feat of the motorship John George, described as "no bigger than a rowboat, and steered by hand" which had come all the way across the ocean from Scotland. This motorship was 130 feet long. Few of the lake sailing vessels which went overseas measured 130 feet in the keel. One or two were a little longer and many were much shorter. The Sea Gull, which went to South Africa, was only a hundred-footer. And the Sea Gull and all the rest of them steered "by hand." There was no other way of steering in vogue. One or more sailors stood at the wheel in two hour tricks and turned and turned till the spokes wore out.

ONE has to keep both anchors over the bows and the leadline going in exploring early navigation records. Norman Beasley, for example, in a recent history of lake navigation (Freighters of Fortune it is called, and it would be all right if he had called it Freighters of Fortunes) gets hard and fast aground by declaring:

"From the lakes men were looking eastward as long ago as 1850, when the brigantine Minnesota built in Chicago and commanded by Captain John Prindiville, sailed up the St. Lawrence river with a cargo of copper from Georgian Bay to Swansea, Wales."

"The Minnesota went on the rocks in the Lachine Rapids, and no further

attempts were made to reach the Atlantic until 1859, when Capt. Albert R. Manning took the schooner *J.F. Warner*, loaded with barrel staves, from Cleveland to Glasgow."

"In 1873 Capt. Prindiville, commanding the *Pamlico*, took the first cargo of grain, when he loaded corn in Chicago for Liverpool."

Wrong in many points.

You cannot reach Wales by sailing up the St. Lawrence River, unless you proceed in an airship, and cross China on the way. The St. Lawrence, like other streams, runs down hill, and down the river is the way the Minnesota had to go to get to Swansea from Georgian Bay.

From the lakes men had been looking eastward long before 1850, and sailing eastward, too, and south, and westward, by way of Cape Horn.

Even if not certain when the earliest seagoing venture from the lakes succeeded, we have the names of at least three lake sailing vessels which had gone overseas before 1850, and of two dozen lakers which had done the same trick by 1859. And grain had been carried to Britain from Chicago in lake schooners a quarter of a century before the *Pamlico's* voyage of 1873.

I have been able to discover fifty-four lake sailing vessels which went from the lakes to salt water and across it. There may be more. I hope so. Tell me if you know. Capt. Jas. McCannel, present commander of that fine C.P.R. upper lakes steamer, the *Assiniboia*, has been most helpful. Between us we have found these: –

- 1847 – *New Brunswick*, Chicago to Liverpool.
- 1848 – *Lillie*, Kingston to England.
Pacific, Toronto to England. (Some confusion exists between this date and 1856), and another *Pacific* went overseas in or about 1874.
- 1849 – *Eureka*, Cleveland to San Francisco, via Cape Horn.
- 1850 – *Sophia*, Kingston to England.
- 1850 – *Minnesota*, Chicago to Swansea.
- 1853 – *Cherokee*, Toronto to Liverpool.
- 1854 – *Arabia*, Kingston to England.
Cataraqui, Kingston to England.
Eliza Mary, Kingston to England.
- 1855 – *Reindeer*, Toronto to England.
City of Toronto, Toronto to Liverpool.
- 1856 – *Dean Richmond*, Milwaukee to Liverpool.
- 1858 – *Queen*, Toronto to England
Chieftain, Detroit to Liverpool
H. E. Howe, Detroit to London

- Black Hawk*, Detroit to Liverpool
Col. Cook, Detroit to Liverpool.
O. B. Sexton, Detroit to London.
Correspondence, Detroit to Liverpool.
Harvest, Detroit to London
E. S. Adams, Lake Ontario to Liverpool.
C. J. Kershaw, Detroit to Liverpool
D. C. Pierce, Detroit to Liverpool.
P. J. Flood, Green Bay Michigan, to West Indies.
J, F. Warner, Detroit to Greenock.
Alexander, Port Dalhousie to Liverpool.
George Thurston, Kingston to England.
- 1861 – *Niagara*, Port Dalhousie to Liverpool.
Prince of Wales, Sarnia to England.
- 1862 – *Sirius*, Detroit for Liverpool
Cotten, Cleveland for Liverpool
Thos. F. Park, Detroit for Liverpool.
- 1863 – *J. G. Dasher*, Bruce Mines to Liverpool.
Cressington (same vessel renamed for second voyage), Detroit for Liverpool.
Ravenna, Detroit to Liverpool, twice.
- 1865 – *Sea Gull*, Toronto to South Africa.
Jessie Drummond, Toronto to Hambourg.
- 1867 – *Garden Island*, Kingston to Liverpool.
Celia, Toronto to Liverpool.
Narragansett, Detroit-Liverpool.
- 1870 – *Thermutus*, Cleveland to Liverpool.
Wirralite, Cleveland to Liverpool.
- 1872 – *City of Green Bay*, Chicago to Liverpool.
- 1873 – *Pimlico*, Chicago to Liverpool,
- 1874 (Date uncertain) – *Pacific*, Chicago to Liverpool.
- 1875 – *Thomas C. Street*, Sheboygan to London.
W. W. Grant, Sheboygan to London.
Edward Blake, Sheboygan to London.
Thistle, Sheboygan to London.
City of Manitowoc, Sheboygan to London.
Jessie Scarth, Sheboygan to London.

- 1914 – *Sephie*, Georgian Bay to England.
- 1917 – *Cora A.*, Milwaukee to Gulf of Mexico.
- 1918 – *Alice*, Milwaukee to Florida.

A few of these fifty-four were deep-draft standing-keel ships, built on the lakes, but intended for ocean traffic and ocean market. Nearly all mentioned were ordinary schooners, built on the current lake model, centreboard and all, intended for lake trade, and returning to it after their salt water effort. Their adventures would fill volumes. Some of them will be recounted in succeeding Saturday issues.