

**Toronto Telegram, September 25, 1943**  
**Schooner Days DCIX (609)**  
**By C.H.J. Snider**

## **HAYBURNING TUG TO THE RESCUE**

BEING caught by a gale alongside a little wharf with no protection from the sweep of the whole lake – the plight of the brigantine *Baltimore* et Grafton Harbor, described recently – was one of the constant perils of the old coasting trade on Lake Ontario. Many a vessel was lost that way, pounding to pieces at the wharf, or driving ashore in a desperate effort to beat out to the open.

Tugs which might have given the victim a chance were seldom available at little places like Grafton Harbor. Schooner Days' old standby, E. J. Guy, of Toronto, was describing recently such a predicament of the *Katie Eccles* at Port Oshawa, when she arrived with a load of coal for the old single pier, which was all the harbor there was before the present one was dredged out and concreted. Vessels then had to load or unload on the run, getting away before the weather got too bad and coming back to finish when they could.

## **UNLOADING ON THE LAM**

The *Katie Eccles* came in with a light breeze and began unloading on the east side of the pier, which had more shelter because of the lay of the land, Bluff Point breaking some of the sea from the eastward. But by the time they had fifty tons out of the after hatch by the old horse-and-bucket method and the schooner's stern was rising like a bird's tail, the sea came in from the southeast so much that she began breaking her lines and fenders. Trimmed by the head as she was thus, by her remaining coal, it was impossible to sail her out, so Steve Taylor, or whoever then commanded her, got all the help he could from the longshoremen and hove her around the pier head, and backed her in on the west side of the dock. This gave her some shelter for a time, and Dan Drew, with his best team of horses, rallied all the shovellers he could find and began to lighten her up forward so as to get her on an even keel for sailing, if she had to cut and run.

Dan was a power in the land of Oshawa, even then. He had come out from Cornwall, got a farm, raised horses, developed a teaming business, and prospered. He deserved to. He did well by his fellow men and was kind to his beasts.

“Scratch! Scrape! Bang!” the coal bounced into the bucket. “Heave away!” came the call. “Giddap!” Dan would answer, and the sweating horses would claw their way up the wet wharf, swaying up the bucket from the hold by means of the rope made fast at their whiffletrees. Then it would be “Back!” and the hoofs would clatter on the planking as the emptied bucket descended, to be changed for one already full, which would be swayed up in turn.

The seas were now coming over the pierhead in solid bursts, almost drowning the horses and Dan as he lead them again and again to the charge. Ed. Guy remembers how they had to jump on the platform of the warehouse door every time a sea burst on the wharf. The *Katie*

*Eccles* was bouncing and pounding and parting her lines, even with the small relief she had got from being shifted to the lee side of the dock.

### **“WITH MANY A TEMPEST HAD HIS BEARD BEEN SHOOK”**

Steve Taylor, his wind-blown beard wet with lake spray, made the great decision. He had to scuttle her once at Lakeport, to save her in similar circumstances, and he wasn't going to involve himself in another salvage job.

“She's got to get out of here, trim or no trim,” said he. “Double reef the mainsail, put one in the foresail, and get the gaskets off the staysail and flying jib!”

“I'll help you,” said Dan Drew. “Give us a good line through a snatch block, and I'll put the team on it when you're ready and give you a start from the dock.”

The wet sails, hoisted by lantern light, rose, flogging heavily in the rain and spray, and snapping and banging their weighty sheet-blocks like chestnut conkers on the end of a string. Dan called to his team – he was a great man with horses – and without the urge of the gad they struggled like Trojans to get the *Eccles* started. The crew, meanwhile, were heaving in the headline on the capstan. The horses plunged, fell, got up, dug their heel caulks in, and plunged ahead again. She began to move forward as well as up and down.

The line being made fast on the schooner's after timber heads and led through a snatchblock on the lakeward end of the wharf pulled the vessel forward as the horses struggled past her to the shore end of the pier.

### **THE GETAWAY**

“Keep her going!” roared Steve. “On the dock, all you shovellers, and help the horses! Now, boys, haul in the head line and give her the headsails when I holler!”

Steve's problem was to get his half-trimmed vessel started so that she would sail into safety in the heart of the storm, instead of pounding to pieces at the dock or onto shore once he had let go his lines. Dan Drew's was equally intricate – to give all the help he could with his two-horsepower hayburners and save himself and his team from being dragged into the lake when the three hundred tons of coal and schooner left the dock behind.

Each man did his best. Steve jumped to the wheel and rolled it hard over as the *Eccles'* bow surged past the end of the wharf. Up went the jibs, the thundering foresail filled, the thrashing mainsail, double reefed and “scandalized,” that is, with its peak dropped so as not to apply too much pressure on the lightened stern, quieted under the strain. The schooner rolled down under the press until the scattered coal washed out of her lee scuppers. He had guessed right! The extra headsail counter-balanced her still being trimmed too much by the head. She commenced to pick up and sail!

Dan did a juggling act with his end of the line as the schooner's stern came abreast of the end of the wharf, and cast it clear of his doubletree, his horses staggering to their knees at the sudden relief. Out she went, as though swallowed by the rain and the seas bursting on the

pierhead. But the dripping longshoremen could see her binnacle light getting dimmer and dimmer as she drew away. She was going out! She was going out!

### **MANY A SLIP**

Guy's Head, where the Hon. Gordon Conant has his residence, loomed up through the night to the west, outlined by the bursts of white spray, even in the darkness. Would she clear that? That was where the *Magdala* drove ashore, taking her anchors with her, after fighting for her life for three days and nights.

Guy's Head was only a mile to leeward. Could the *Eccles* clear it? If she couldn't, could she tack against that sea or wear around, and go clear of the wharf she had left, let alone Bluff Point, a mile to the eastward?

Some of the boys began racing along the beach to be in time to pick up survivors in case she washed ashore. They could see her starboard light, jumping like a green will-o'-the-wisp – but farther and farther away as they ran. She was going clear! She was going clear!

She did. Though Steve said afterwards he could have jumped from his cabin top to the green turf on Guy's Head as she passed. But she weathered it, and by the time he had given her sheet she was abreast of Port Whitby, six miles up the lake. So he jibed her over and shot her into that narrow-necked jug like a latchkey going into the lock. It was hard work stopping her, but two anchors checked her before her lance-like jibboom could prod the old grain storehouse that used to stand at the head of the harbor, and she rode snug. It was a week before she could get back to Oshawa to unload and pick up the snatchblock she had left behind on the wharf. That was what made cargoes to shelterless ports so unprofitable.

### **PASSING HAILS FROM DOWN BELOW**

"I read with some pleasure the article on the *Katie Eccles* in the last issue of The Telegram. I remember her quite well. As a boy I climbed her rigging. Another little schooner, I remember, was the *Robert MacDonald*. Many the time I climbed her rigging.

"In Mr. McGlennon's remarks on the *Eccles*, I recall the trip he speaks of in 1912 on the *Renvoyle*. I know the master of her at that time, very well, but he did not say anything about the man that lost his slippers in Oswego.

"If you should be in touch with our mutual friend, Capt. John, ask him about the time the lads started spiking the clock on him; also the time they buried the man on the Main Ducks.

"I met an old-timer in Oswego, Tim Burke, of the T. J. Burke Lumber Company, and he remembers all the old schooners. Will you forward him The Telegram for one year and mail me the account in Colborne, Ontario? I am sure he will get a lot of pleasure reading Schooner Days.

"I rode Mate with Captain John for three years, and he was all sailor, the best. He brought the *Hagarty* out, a new ship. Going up Superior that fall on a bad night, she was open on top then, Capt. John got up around three o'clock, went up on the bridge. The Mate was hiding

in behind the weather cloth. The Mate said, ‘Captain, this is an awful night.’ Captain John replied, ‘The Collingwood Ship Yard have a guarantee on this ship for one year and this is a good night to try her out.’”

W. E. REDFEARN,  
Master, S.S. Outarde.

(Caption) DANIEL DREW, hero of the little episode related, and his good lady, on a proud occasion. Mr. and Mrs. Drew, well-known residents of Oshawa, lived to celebrate their golden wedding.

(Caption) REEFING TO GET AWAY – While the schooner strains and surges on her lines the crew close reef the mainsail to give her a pickup from the threatening breakers to leeward.