

Toronto Telegram, November 20, 1943
Schooner Days DCXVII (617)
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MERRY TIMES in the "MAPLE LEAF"

PARTY SAILING, as it was called, was a pleasant summer subindustry in the lake trade forty years ago. From a dozen to twenty lads would be carried around Ontario, on a two weeks' cruise for less money than it would cost them now for room and board in the city. In those days sailors could be fed on 25 cents a day by a good cook. The boys would have three meals a day of good, plain, nourishing food – meat, eggs, fish, vegetables – and in shelf-like bunks fitted up in the hold would sleep snug on straw mattresses, with tarpaulins rigged over the open hatches to keep them dry and give ventilation. The centreboard box, dividing the hold in the middle, was a back wall for the diner-table. The cooking was done on the cabin stove. The hold also stabled the “wheels,” for it was a bicycle age, and the boys brought their mounts for runs ashore, and could get home without paying train fare any time they wished.

For these summer cruises the vessel would be swept clean of cargo traces and painted fresh from trucks to waterline. Her deck would be dark red, leadcolor, or brown. Her masts would be scraped, the heads and doublings and blocks whitened, gaffs and booms painted white or yellow with white ends, the rail and coveringboard green, with a red ribband between, cabin trunk and topsides white, bottom lead color, stern bright with decoration, and the yawlboat on the davits to match the parent vessel. The slim whiplash fly which served regularly as a windvane might be replaced by a long broad burgee, in club colors, with the vessel's name or the initials of the cruisers organization. Bicycle and athletic clubs and the YMCA patronized such cruises year after year. Of course the color scheme varied with the individual vessel. The one described would fit the *Maple Leaf* of Toronto, one of the best organized summer cruisers, 70 feet long, 100 tons burthen, owned and sailed by Capt. Richard Goldring, long resident in Port Whitby. We would like to tell more about him and his *Maple Leaf* next week.

The schooner would be run like a summer camp, Capt. Goldring or the master looking after the navigation, the boys “keeping house” and having complete run of the ship. They would swarm all over her like monkeys, often in very unseaman-like attitudes, but they learned to climb, and to hand, reef and steer.

There was music and fun all the time of their own making, no liquor and no rough stuff. The schooner being shoal draft, they would run into all sorts of little coves where the bass bit well or the scenery was super, and in the circuit of the lake might visit every port between Hamilton and Alexandria Bay in the Thousand Islands. The simple life, and a merry one, Capt. Goldring enjoyed is as much as the boys. He never had an accident.

Party sailing was not confined to YMCA lads, nor to the *Maple Leaf*, nor the Goldrings. The Williams boys had many summer cruises with like attitudes, but they learned to the schooner *Highland Beauty*, Capt. Tommy being the master and his brother, Kew Williams, chief

entertainer. The yacht *Condor* had a regular round, as far as her deep draught would permit, and late into the 1920s, after the *Goldrings* went off the water, Capt. “Mike” Raines, who had bought the *North West*, had her summer cruising with a special rig and radial antennae between her topmost trucks. She carried on, out of Midland and under other ownership and another name – *Shebeshe-kong* – until the present war broke out, and at length got to Chicago. When seen in Lake St. Clair in 1939 she had had a rebuild, with trunk cabins, diesel engines, and round portholes which made her almost unrecognizable. She still retained remnants of a schooner rig.

Captions:

- (i) Sunbasked on the lee side of the
- (ii) Bunked in the hold and made a buffet on the centreboard