

Toronto Telegram, November 27, 1943
Schooner Days DCXVIII (618)
By C.H.J. Snider

The MAPLE LEAF

“The Maple Leaf, our emblem dear,
The Maple Leaf forever
God Save Our King and Heaven bless
The Maple Leaf forever”

MAPLE LEAF was a name rich in meaning sixty years ago. Three schooners bore it on the Great Lakes, one, surprisingly, hailing from Buffalo, another from Prince Edward County, the third from Toronto. Green, golden or splashed with fire, graciously shaped whatever its size, deeply indented but broad, sharply notched but gracious, the maple leaf gave us a song, a hymn of hope, and imaged both the tree it came from and the country which grew the tree. Country and tree alike were young, vigorous, untamed; with racing blood that shone its deepest crimson in the frost of autumn, and furnished food and fire and furniture for men with muscle enough to swing an axe and drive a sap-auger.

This desk, so often mentioned, has rock maple in it from Sir James Lucas Yeo's three-decker St. Lawrence, sound as the day it was cut in 1814.

Grandfather knew no more of soft maples that grow like weeds and clog city sewer pipes than he did of “Owe, Canadah.” or of economics which triumph by depriving everybody of maple syrup. His maple was the hard maple, black outside and white within, clean grained, starred with birdseyes, flecked with gold, the kind that made barn sills and ship timber that is sound to-day, or which kept coals in the open hearth or big box stove under a blanket of white ashes all night long in zero weather.

Built and rebuilt in Bronte, hailing from here, homing in Port Whitby, and named for a great emblem and a great song, the *Maple Leaf* of Toronto was a little schooner of which Canada could be proud.

The *Maple Leaf* was only 70 feet long, according to her registered dimensions, 18 feet 6 inches beam. 5 feet 4 inches deep in the hold. Being a centre-boarder, 2 feet of water was almost enough to float her when her hold was clean swept and the board was up in the box. Loaded she drew 5 feet, and 5 feet more with the board lowered. Her registered tonnage was 59, but she could float 100 tons of coal and perhaps more.

Alex Le Clair, who launched her around 1880, has long gone over the horizon, but the man who made her famous still flourishes in Port Whitby among descendants and connections almost as numerous and as brilliant as the maple leaf itself. This is Capt. Richard Goldring, for 37 years a vessel master, and 35 of these in the *Maple Leaf*.

Her career was more varied than his, for he ploughed a long straight furrow to the pair of anchors set in concrete in front of his cosy home and garden in Port Whitby. The schooner, built

round-nosed and spoon-bowed, but not a scow, came through the Esplanade fire of 1885 a scorched hulk. He took her back to Len Dorland at Bronte and worked on her all winter. Next year she emerged like a glittering phoenix from her own ashes, a quick-sheered clipper-bowed vessel of yachty profile, qualified alike to serve a generation of YMCA boys on summer cruises and to pave the macadamized Toronto of her time with her cargoes.

Capt. Goldring never allowed the grass to grow on her keel or on her decks. When she was not carrying cruise parties between Hamilton and the Thousand Islands, she was scouring the lake shore for stone – cobbles, pavers, hardheads for the crushers, gravel for the roofers, sand for the moulders, blue lake limestone for the builders. Or apples, oats, wheat, barley, lumber or shingles for export. Nor did she despise a coal freight, though her sides were kept milk white above her lead-color trim. Her captain and owner retired into the coal business and prospered.

After he sold her she drifted far from YMCA cruises. Across the border, into foreign hands. Rum-running allegations got her into the marshal's clutches in the prohibition era. James Ferguson of Kingston made an honest woman of her again in the small coal trade. In the American Channel in the St. Lawrence river she was lost in 1926, being unable to beat out of a predicament at which she would have laughed in her early days. She was a good little vessel all her forty-six years, and she saved lives, as will be told next week.

(Caption) MAPLE LEAVES AND MAPLE BUDS--A FAMILY GATHERING AT PORT WHITBY Surrounded by the maple leaf – and repeated In the picture, as are some younger sprigs of the maple – is CAPT. RICHARD GOLDRING, for .15 years master and owner of the trim schooner MAPLE LEAF of TORONTO. Four generations of Goldrings are shown here – Captain Dick, as his old friends call him; his son who has the post office and general store at Port Whitby, a grandchild and great-grandchild – beside daughters, in-laws and connections.

(Caption) THE MAPLE LEAF on a cruise to Alexandria Bay in the gay nineties.