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Schooner Days DCXX (620)
By C. H. J. Snider

MAPLE LEAF TO THE RESCUE

THE *MAPLE LEAF*, queen of the little north shore fleet, was coming up the lake from Whitby one day late in the summer, laden deep with stone, for the YMCA cruising was done, and she was back into overalls. Capt. Richard Goldring was sailing her with his two boys – which was enough crew to handle her, but left nothing to spare. The wind was fresh, pretty well off the land, but with enough westing in it to shake her headsails at times and break her off from her course. So, by the time she was up abreast of Balmy Beach she was a few miles out from the shore.

Capt. Goldring's twinkling eyes noted a sailing dinghy romp out from the Eastern Gap ahead. The water was smooth inshore and she made fast time. But when she got into the little chop outside, that and the fresh breeze were too much for her, and she capsized.

Two men clung to her, calling for help, six miles from anyone on the shore.

"The lifeguards or the beach patrol shouldn't have let them go out," thought Capt. Goldring, "and now they can't hear them or see them, or get to them in time if they could."

Methodically he kept the *Maple Leaf* away to give her a good full and sailed her for all she was worth – which was plenty. The water was cold and the wind was high. He knew there must be no fumbling. There would be no second chance at rescuing them. If he tried to come alongside and missed they might let go and drown. They might be too numb to use a line if he hove one. They might even slip from his fingers as he tried to haul them over the rail.

So he rounded the *Maple Leaf* to, close to the dinghy, told Norman and George Ernest what to do, and lowered his little yawlboat from the stern davits. She was not towing her big working scow, as most stonehookers did, for she loaded below Whitby and usually left the deck scow in harbor.

The yawlboat marked the difference between the out-and-out stone-hooker, which never could afford one, and the schooner, large or small, which always carried one. It was a rowing boat, 16 feet long for the larger vessels, about 12 feet for the *Maple Leaf*, and was carried across the stern, hanging from wooden davits. It was heavily built, high ends, and meant for work in rough water. It had tholepins or rowlocks for at least two oars a side, but was usually propelled by a long sculling oar, rolling in a notch in the square transom stern. The name is often shortened to yawl, which is properly descriptive of a certain rig. The word yawlboat is akin to jollyboat, the same boat, carried in the same way across the stern, being meant by both.

Into the little yawlboat Capt. Goldring jumped, unhooked the davit tackles and sculled to the dinghy like a torpedo. Just in time. Before the boat's stem touched the water-logged craft

one of the men let go. Capt. Goldring grabbed him, hauled him into the yawlboat unconscious, and seized the other just as a last little wave washed him away.

Then came the trip back to the *Maple Leaf*. The boys on board, light and not full-grown, had a hard time hoisting the rescued on board and getting the yawl up. The men were chilled to the bone, heavy with the water they had absorbed, and suffering from shock, which was less understood then, before the Great War, than it is now. There was no whisky in the *Maple Leaf*. Capt. Goldring, a temperate man, kept her dry in the pumpwell and the cabin. But the three Goldrings worked on their charges methodically, boiling the kettle, rubbing them dry, and keeping clothing on them, and when the *Maple Leaf* boiled through the Gap an hour later they were able to sit up and wave to the anxious lifeguards

“Good work, captain,” hailed Capt. W.R. Wakely of the big three-masted topsail schooner *Stuart H. Dunn*, from the pier. “I saw it all. They were goners if you hadn’t done what you did.”

Capt. Goldring thought no more of it, and was surprised to be presented with the Royal Humane Society’s bronze lifesaving medal. You may have noticed, in that fine picture of the “maple leaves and maple buds” gathered around at Port Whitby, that the old gentleman whom they so lovingly encircle is modestly wearing a medal. This was it. Capt. Goldring, eighty-four now, forty-nine when he won it, but even then thirty-two years master of a vessel. He began his lakefaring young, and we shall have more to tell of him later.

(Caption) “He gave the *Maple Leaf* a good full.’ – The yawlboat on the davits is the background for Capt. Goldring at the wheel, and the picture below is a recent one of him when he had been persuaded to wear his medal.

(Caption) “BRAVERY Royal Canadian Humane Association awarded to CAPT. R[^]GOLDRING for courage in the rescue of G. Alien and H. Garfield from drowning July. 1908.” Above is the inscription on the bronze medal awarded the master of the *Maple Leaf* thirty-five years ago.