

Toronto Telegram, January 15, 1944
Schooner Days, DCXXIV (624)
By C.H.J. SNIDER

BEAUTIES of the BAY

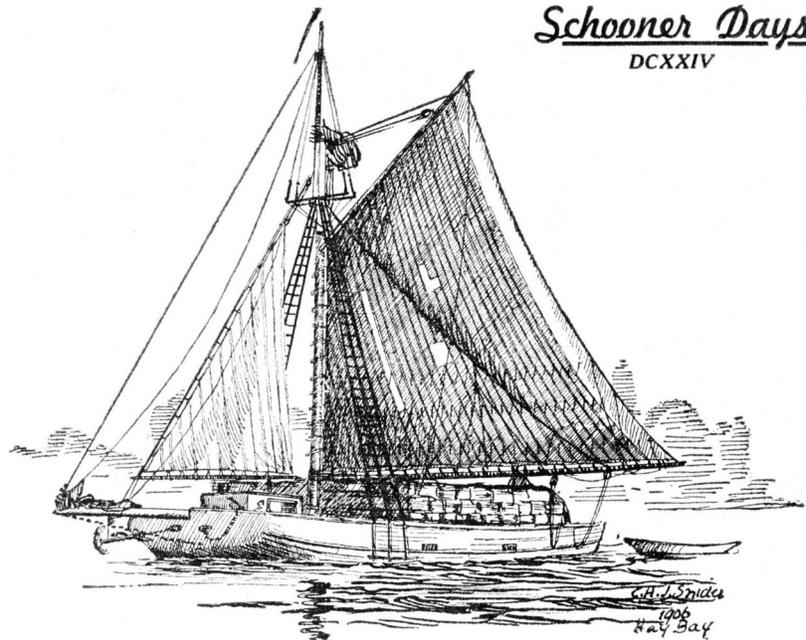
WHETHER entered from the south through the Upper Gap, with Lake Ontario tumbling green and blue and bursting white in breakers on Point Traverse and the False Ducks, or beaten into from the east past the Brothers, which end the fairy chain of the Thousand Islands, or reached from the west by the lockless Murray Canal, quiet as a country lane, the Bay of Quinte is ever a new world of summer delight.

In winter it freezes over, its shores, high or low, mantled in snow, if there is snow anywhere, its waters a firm pavement for a hundred miles. In the old days more teaming was done on the Bay of Quinte during the winter than on the Dundas highway or Adolphustown road which paralleled it. The Bay was more level and less drifted. Motors seldom use it now in preference to the present highways – but the ice of Quinte carries them over to Prince Edward county instead of the car ferries for which they wait or miss in summer.

No matter how or how often one enters the Bay there is always that feeling of coming into a world of wonders. Seen in the magic light of Quinte from the end of the ancient Carrying Place trail last summer, ultra modem Trenton airport, shining white under the R.C.A.F. blue ensign, had all the glamor of Cadiz or Algiers, even to one who had been to all three.

The same magic bathes the ridges, marshes and headlands of the Bay for a hundred miles, from Kingston to Presque Isle. The shores, richly wooded or ripe in harvest, amble down to the smooth water like cattle coming to drink. There is little wharfage or cribbing, few made harbors, because it is all natural harbor.

Picton hits the prettiest harbor on the Great Lakes. You beat down between high shores, the mystery lake-on-the-mountain away to port, to starboard the high plateau back of Hallowell Mills, till you come to stake-buoys marking the narrowed channel. Then you nip around a low



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DCXXIV

*BAY OF QUINTE SLOOP OF FORTY YEARS AGO,
SCUPPER DEEP WITH BALED HAY*

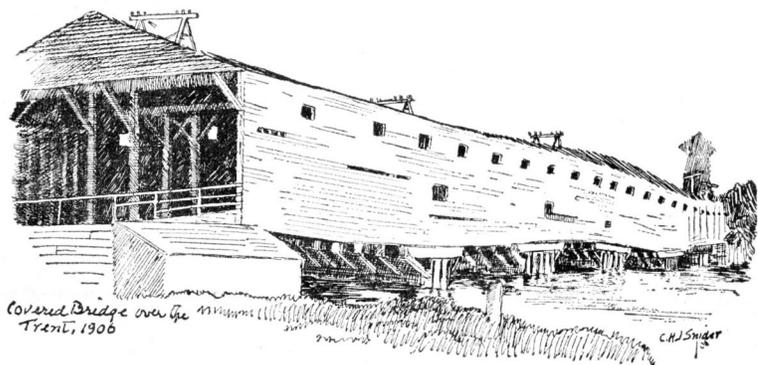
tree garnished point, and enter a long narrow sleeve [of] pines, sylvan loveliness and bulrushes to port and to starboard a high limestone bank, with a clean, gracious town atop, and below boathouses, wharves, an hospitable yacht club, and, at the far end modern storage wharves and a bridge. Prinyer's Cove is a runner-up for Picton in beauty, and pure unspoiled naturalness. It has held the whole L.Y.R.A. fleet at regatta time and moored steamers and schooners to its sylvan banks.

Now Picton, Deseronto, Belleville, Trenton and Napanee are the survivors of dozens of ports which have faded away to names or nothingness. Can you sail your way to Ship Island or Big Hill or Mill Point or Roblin's Cove or the Iron Mills or Bogart's Wharf or Coles Ferry or Point Ann or Shannonville or Captain John's Island or The Vault, Hallowell Mills or Cressy or Conway or Millhaven or Ernestown or Bath or even Northport? – not to mention Stella and Emerald and Parrott Cove and Preston Cove, or Waupoos and Port Milford and Black River and Half Moon Point? Our grandfathers did, but they had no filling station road maps to guide them.

In schooner days the Bay shores bristled with wharves and warehouses, named or unnamed, where square or round-bilged scows or two and three-masted centre borders loaded tanbark, timber, shingles, bunchwood, apples, barley, buckwheat, oats and hay and hurried it down to Kingston or across the lake to Oswego, and came panting back with salt and stoves and nursery stock and dry goods and groceries and books and wallpaper for the farms of Prince Edward, Hastings, and Lennox and Addington counties.

Then every concession line and sideroad ended with a loading shed overhanging the water, with a block under a pent roof for hoisting the heavier goods or trimming the wooden spout which fed the grain to the waiting holds. Where the sloops and schooners could not get into the wharf, they moored to the bank and loaded with bushel baskets carried aboard on planks, or even with their sails stripped from the spars and used as funnels to bring the grain to the hatches.

Steamers "ran the Bay" daily, from Trenton at one end, with its long red wavy covered bridge over the Trent River, and its sawmills and lumber piles, to Kingston at the other – the old *City of the Bay*, *Varuna*, *Ella Ross*, *Waterlily*, *Annie Gilbert*, *Quinte*, *Saxon*, *Iona*, and *Hero* among the local boats, the *North King*, *Spartan*, *Passport*, *Algerian*, *Magnet*, *Corinthian* and others of the Richelieu and Ontario Navigation Company in a



"TRENTON WITH THE LONG RED WAVY COVERED BRIDGE" – These wooden bridges were covered to keep the timbers from rotting from the weather. A similar covered bridge over the Don in Toronto was the scene of the murder of John Sheridan Hogan, M.P.P.

through line, after the Murray Canal was opened in 1890. Every place mentioned had a caller of some kind, daily or often.

Times changed, and the exports from the Bay dwindled to cheese and canned goods and the imports to coal. The Bay shores retained their pastoral loveliness, though motor cars pushed the horse and buggy from the banks, and now bombing areas clutter the water with their buoys and targets and crashboats, and the ducks and gulls and loons and cranes have hot competition from bigger fowl that can fly miles while they are making furlongs.

But still the song birds sing all the summer day among the wooded shores as one sails by; still the little turtles sun themselves on the lily pads; still the Holsteins saunter down to quaff, knee-deep; still the herons flap away on heavy wing with long legs trailing behind like sculling oars. Still the wind comes over the high banks in sudden squalls that shatter the bronze mirror of the bay into sapphire fields flecked with white; still the old names persist; still the old memories of the Loyalists – the Crimean War – the barley trade – the last war – the prohibition era – linger.

And still scribblers like the above signed like to write about the Bay.