

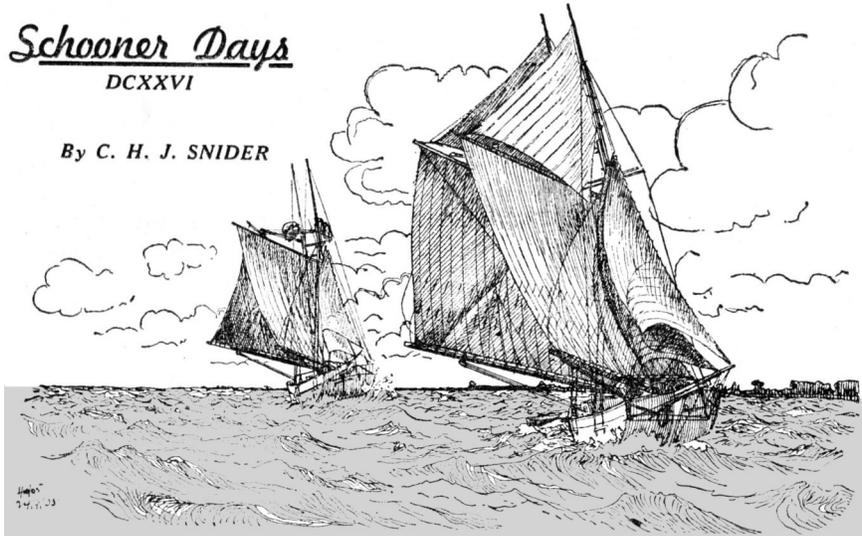
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Schooner Days, DCXXVI (626)
BY C.H.J. SNIDER

GOLD DUST WATER

CALL the Bay of Quinte “Kanty” or “Quinty” you won’t go wrong in pronunciation, and as for spelling, the old writers, French and English, ranged through Quinte, Quintee, Cuintio, to Kentay, to give the sound of the Indian name which probably had nothing to do with fives or quintuplets, but may have meant a land of habitations, or of meadows. Both would be applicable.

Schooner Days DCXXVI

By C. H. J. SNIDER



BRISK BREEZE DOWN THE BAY – when little scow schooners still thronged it, fifty years ago.

Quinte water is not the crystal clear of Ontario where it is unspoiled by oil and sewage. It has a slight olive green shade from vegetation, and it is flecked with millions of golden specks, the pollen of some water plant; but, like bushwater, it is alright to drink, and it is better to bathe in than the water on the lake beaches near the city of Toronto.

No sea ever runs in Quinte comparable to the lake roll, though the short chop of Big Bay, one of the widenings can be uncomfortable. And while the whole of Quinte may be considered a land-locked harbor, it is full of wrecks, and has had its share of tragedy. The Sunday School children drowned in Hay Bay are commemorated in the Prince Edward County ballad, the Sabbath sorrow of Smith Bay in 1865 in another.

The steamer *Quinte* was burned with loss of life in the Long Reach below Deseronto. In Hay Bay, too, the schooner *Kate* was capsized in a squall in 1895 and half her crew were drowned; the captain, Big Frank Duetta, came up, as from the grave, on the capsized vessel’s rudder. The *Kate* was Oakville built. She was rechristened the *Wilfrid Plunkett* years after the capsized. And was burned at Belleville about 1909. Now the casualties are airmen, lost as last summer when something has gone wrong with their cloud chariots or with their split-second calculations.

But in general the memories of the Bay are opulent of simple toil rewarded by prosperity, of summer sailing in brown and golden waters between shores of gold and emerald, of homely,

cosy traffic, and of the life of sweet-savored folk.

The very place names smack of it. The Calf Pasture, as you come in from the lake at Presqu'isle, to reach the Bay by the Murray Canal; Twelve O'Clock Point, where they made it "noon hour" after sweating at hauling the boats across the Carrying Place from the lake into the Bay on Asa Weller's wooden rail-way, a hundred years before the canal was cut; Pig Point, over on Amherst Island, and Ox Point, down the Bay, near Horse Point, and the Minnie Blakeley Shoal, where the schooner so named, a homely Port Credit scow called after the local hotelkeeper's pretty daughter struck and perished, eaten by the cargo of ashes she was carrying. Asheries were once common on the Quinte shores and potash and pearl-ash were among the exports.

WHAT of Ship Island and McIntosh Island (assuming these names to apply to different spots) which are much nearer Belleville than Telegraph, and just below Massasauga Point? Incidentally, how about a convention on the spelling of this reminder of the Missisaga Indians?

The word is spelled in a dozen different ways, all only approximations, because the Indians had no alphabet. G-r-e-a-t-m-o-u-t-h, if that is what the word meant would be Schooner Days' suggestion, but would settle for a minimum of s's and two vowels.

Capt. John McIntosh was born about 1775 and was a pioneer of Belleville, where he built the first frame storehouse for goods. This remained until the year of Confederation. His own dwelling, which he also built, sheltered Sir Isaac Brock in the War of 1812, and Governor Gore after the war. The settlement, then called Meyers Creek, from Meyers Mill and Meyers Castle on the Moira, was named Belleville after the governor's lady, Bella Gore, who had lunch at the place.

Capt. McIntosh was in the employ of Capt. Jacob W. Meyers, and like him held a commission in the militia in the War of 1812. He was also one of the early lake masters, and brought in the supplies which Meyers sold to the settlers and Indians. He had a farm on the Kingston road, east of Belleville, in Thurlow township near the little old Methodist church, and it was to visit his farm, when his schooner was becalmed off Ox Point, that he plunged overboard with his clothes on his head, and so was drowned. This occurred on Sept. 23rd, 1815.

Fred B. Meyers of 428 Bloor street west, Toronto, great grandson of Capt. Meyers, recalls a clump of lilacs in the middle of a field on the old McIntosh farm, with a marble slab among them, inscribed in memory of Capt. McIntosh. He had been buried there, on his own farm, his body floating ashore on a small stony island afterwards known as McIntosh Island, west of Massasauga Point.

From the position and description McIntosh's Island could not be the islet designated as Ship Island in the Bay charts, for this is a mile east of the point. It was just discernible by reason of one drowned bush above the high water of last summer. At low water a few yards of it are visible, but no indication of a ship or shipyard. Vessels are said to have been built there. There is also a tradition of a British schooner having been chased up the Bay of Quinte in the War of

1812 and burned “below Belleville,” where Ship Island lies. Mr. Meyers speaks of a schooner named the *Ben Davy* having been burned or captured at Bath, which is considerably below Belleville, by the Americans. Peter Davy was a Trenton neighbor of Capt. Meyers, and left two sons, Ben and George. Commodore Chauncey reported the capture of the schooner *Two Brothers* to the prize court at Sackets Harbor after his raid into the Bay of Quinte and he also mentioned burning a schooner “at Ernestown,” the township where Bath still flourishes. *Ben Davy* may have been one of the two brothers for whom this prize of war was named; she may have been named after him and so suggested the name reported to the prize court. She is said to have been burned at the Ernestown wharf, and there is little likelihood of her “papers,” if any, surviving.

Man Who Put Telegraph On Telegraph Island.

NOW we have something about Telegraph Island, four miles west of Deseronto, whose name was a puzzle because there seemed no evidence of it ever having had a telegraph pole or wire. That sound Canadian historical artist, C. W. Jefferys, agreed that the name probably arose from the island being used for a manual signal system of flags or semaphore arms carrying warnings of hostile approach in the War of 1812, and confirmed what we had said about the name telegraph, meaning writing at a distance, being applied to such a signal system long before the electric telegraph was invented. Telegraph Island was so named on a township map in 1878 and an admiralty chart in 1890, and there is no reason to doubt that the name may have been passed down from the War of 1812 or the Mackenzie Rebellion. But Manly Macdonald’s suggestion that the island was also the landing place of an electric telegraph line receives confirmation from a man who helped make it literally a telegraph island in our present day sense, possibly eighty years after it was in service as a visual telegraph site or signal station. J. W. Reid writes from Picton:

“Re Telegraph Light on Bay of Quinte. In the year 1893. May 17th pole set. John Rose and myself stood on Picton dock and made a wager to work on CPR telegraph and telephone line in Deseronto. Under Boss Pat Flood went up Kingston road to Mohawk reserve, across plains to Bay Quinte shore opposite Telegraph Light.

“Boss Flood said we had to put a pole on the island and asked for someone to row steel across. I told him if he would take the centre seat out of a punt I would row it across. We put the pole on the island, laid a cable from Mohawk plains to Telegraph Island and strung wire from the island to the Prince Edward shore. The line ran along C. F. Black’s farm to the road, from there to Northport, Demorestville and Picton.”



Mr J.W. Reid in 1892.

So now we know that Telegraph Island, already so named, was really a telegraph island in the modern or electric sense from 1893 onward. Thank you, Mr. Reid.