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Schooner Days, DCXXXII (632)
By C. H. J. SNIDER

“DEFIANCES” of the Lakes

DEFIANCE'S name and nature clung to her all her long life. She was so christened, as a gesture of esteem for the farmers who threatened her builders, when she was cut from the bush at the mouth of the Etobicoke Creek one winter a hundred years ago.

She was always defying somebody or something – farmers – sailors – the lake – the seasons – Father Time.

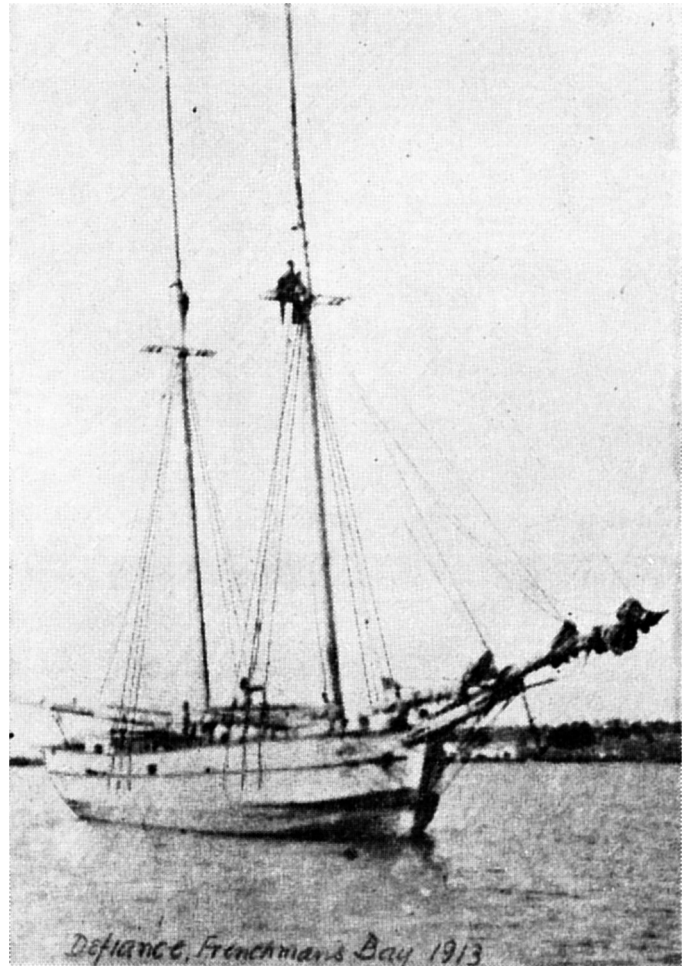
In '53 she ran all winter to Niagara. In 1854 she came into the Queen's Wharf with a load of wood on Dec. 28th. She was the last ship into Toronto harbor again in 1881 and again in 1887, on the 19th of December in each of those years, and the first in 1898, on the 5th of January, with stone from Bronte; claimed the Harbormaster's Hat, and didn't get it, on the technicality that she was completing a voyage of the previous season, not opening a new season's navigation. This big-hearted precedent was applied against an oil carrier even in 1944.

In addition to her human antagonists she was always defying the old gentleman with the scythe. It took him all but seventy years to catch up with her. Once he almost had her, but “Bose” McCraney came to the rescue with a hammer and saw and adze and ship-axe and staved him off to the next generation.

SHE was, from the beginning, as hard mouthed as Dinny the dinosaur, and it took the drastic expedient of moving both her masts forward at the foot to cure that.

Long before he became Toronto's Fire Chief – and that was in 1895 – Tom Graham sailed the *Defiance* for Capt. Moodie. He told the compiler:

BUILT 100 YEARS AGO



This DEFIANCE was built at the mouth of the Etobicoke Creek before 1845, the year in which she was registered at Toronto. She first ran as a Niagara packet. Seventy years later she was a stonehooker.

“Though the *Defiance* was shorter than a ferryboat, she was considered a real big vessel in her time, and I was proud of the command. She could be baulky as a blind mule when she wanted to, and was a holy terror for sulking and getting into irons. She was trimmed by the head, and her masts were stepped too far aft in the first place, and the rake they had threw her sails farther aft still. She’d come up in the wind and refuse to fall off on either tack, until the square topsail would push her around, and then she would have sternway on. It took an extra man to work that square topsail. I carried two puncheons on the quarter, and many’s the time I’ve had to fill or empty them to trim her for tacking. She was hard to run. That is, to sail with the wind over the stern and the sails spread on both sides, wing and wing, for the masts raked so much that the booms wanted to come in, and in light air only the topsail would draw. But when you could get her going she was fast, for though she was chubby her runs were good and clean, and she was a good carrier. She would pile out twice the load of some of those square scows that were as long as she was but so shallow.”

That is so. With the flat little *Wood Duck*, of the same overall length – though she wasn’t a scow, but built for a shoal-draught yacht – were lucky to get more than two toise of stone in a load. The *Defiance* could carry five or six. Her official dimensions in the first Dominion register published, 1874, were 49 feet length from stem to sternpost, beam 14 ft. 9 inches, depth of hold 4 feet 9 inches. James W. Cotton, Port Credit, was then her registered owner.

THERE were other *Defiances*, all born after the Etobicoke lass, but she outlived them all. The biggest was the *Defiance* of Cleveland, built there by R. Calkins in 1855 or 1856, length 136 feet, beam 26, depth 10 feet 7, registered tonnage 350; equal to one of our “old canallers” and ten times as big as our *Defiance*. There was a *Defiance* of Port Hope, 141 tons, built there in 1859 by Robert Manson and owned by W. Garnet. Last year in Port Whitby we saw one of her old clearances for Oswego, R. McLaren master, cargo 6,000 bushels of fall wheat. She was probably of about twice that capacity and may have kept going much longer, for in 1895, the year the *W. T. Greenwood* was lost off Oak Orchard, we were told of a schooner called the *Defiance* “painted black and red and the living image of the *Greenwood*” trading out of Port Colborne. She was said to have been burned somewhere afterwards. Another *Defiance* was a flat schooner of 110 tons built by W. Ham on the Manitou in Lake Michigan in 1852, and owned by John Ham in Sheboygan. And there was a 15,000 bushel river barge of the same name built in Quebec in 1854 and owned by E. Berry of Kingston, in the St. Lawrence river trade.

In the list of lake sailing vessels published in 1856 and claimed to be “the first thing of its kind ever presented to the Canadian public” appears the record of the schooner *Defiance*, R. Moodie owner, 37 tons burthen, built in Etobicoke 1845. This was Boss Harris’ baby. She may have been built earlier than that, but only registered in that year. Capt. Bob Moodie also owned the first Toronto harbor tug, the *Fire Fly*, for which there was so little business, thanks to the thrift or skill of the sailing vessel captains, that the Harbor Commissioners of 1857 had to give him a subsidy of \$100 to keep him in the port. The *Fire Fly* became an island ferry, and Chief Graham sailed her as well as the *Defiance*.

In a spring gale of April 18th, 1855, another *Defiance*, sailed by Capt. Conklin, was lost with all hands on Lake Ontario. "Landmarks" of Toronto mention three vessels arriving at the Queen's Wharf as late as the 28th of December, 1854, and one of these was the schooner *Defiance* with a cargo of cordwood from Niagara. More likely our hard mouthed girl than the one that was lost next year. The Landmarks say earlier that "the fast sailing schooner *Defiance*, Capt. Moodie, ran twice a week throughout the season of 1853 between Toronto and Niagara. Robert Maitland, Church street wharf, was the principal owner."

This would be our defiant Etobicoker and she then probably carried passengers as well as package freight. Later, in the stone trade, our *Defiance* continued to flout frost and ice and age, until 1913.