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**Schooner Days DCLXXVI (676)**  
**By C.H.J. Snider**

## **LAST COAL OF LAST CENTURY**

### **Tons of It Never Burned – And This Was Why**

TORONTO burned 3,000,000 tons of coal in 1944, and of this 1,900,000 came by water, some of it in 10,000-ton cargoes, self-unloaded in a few hours. In 1900 our waterborne coal was less than 190,000 tons, and it came in cargoes of 800 tons at the most, which took two days to unload by steam hoist or a week by horse and bucket.

Three ships were homeward bound up Lake Ontario with Toronto's last coal cargoes of the 19th century, on the 25th of November, 1900. The wind was rising to a gale. At dusk snow set in. The leading schooner found Toronto via the Eastern Gap, a fine piece of blind navigation. Another rounded the lighthouse on Gibraltar Point and stood into Humber Bay until the lake shore trains could be heard through the snow, staggered out to the lake again for safety, and anchored, after daylight, Sunday morning, in the storm-tossed lake off Port Credit. Daylight revealed the third schooner hard and fast aground and close inshore, a mile west of Port Credit lighthouse, with her crew in the rigging, and plugged pickle bottles from the cabin washing in the surf, enclosing messages imploring help.

The schooner which found Toronto blindfold was the *Antelope*, Capt. Wm. Wakeley, a fore-and-after. Early in the day Capt. Wakeley had been surprised to see the three-master astern of him rounding up as though broaching-to, and clewing up her mizzen gafftopsail before she could be got on her course again. She had been steering wildly before, and continued to weave and yaw back and forth like a drunken man.

At dusk it was blowing harder and snow began to fall. Capt. Wakeley sighted the glare of Toronto street lights, mostly gas, in the sky and took a careful compass bearing. The snow shut in so thick that nothing could be seen. He squatted the *Antelope's* mainsail down to the third reef band, and climbed the fore rigging, kicking snow from the ratlines as he did so, and stared into the smother. A red blur shone to leeward. "Up, hard up!" he sang out to the two men at the wheel, "Jibe her over all standing!"

He slid down the rigging in time to gather in the slack of the fore sheet, as the snow filled sail bellowed and thundered and swung over with a bang, followed by the heavy squatted mainsail which came without mishap because it had already been half lowered. The red light then on the pierhead of the Eastern Gap seemed to be right over the *Antelope's* crosstrees as she ploughed through the snow into the shelter of the invisible harbor.

The *Jessie Drummond* was off Whitby at this time. On she came through the snow, with never a glint of light or whimper of whistle to guide her. By ten o'clock her captain, Jimmy Quinn of Oakville, knew he had run his distance to Gibraltar Point, and hauled her in for the lee

of the Western Sandbar where now the warplanes ride. The foghorn was going every minute and a half and the lighthouse was flashing every fifteen seconds, but neither hoot nor wink reached the *Drummond* smothering in the snow. “Whoo-hoo-hoo!” came a locomotive whistle through the Parkdale cutting, and he knew that in clearing Gibraltar he had missed the anchorage, and would have to face the raging lake again.

He did so, much against the wishes of his crew, who wanted him to beach her. He sawed back and forth up the lake, and stood in for the shore when daylight came. The snow cleared just in time to show him the spars of a three-master ahead, hard and fast ashore. He let go two anchors quickly and fetched the *Drummond* up short in the Hamilton steamboat track, away out in the lake off Port Credit. She rolled like a loop-the-loop till she got head-to, and she dragged along the Stoney bottom and parted one chain, but the other anchor held – and what happened after that may be told another time.

The third of the schooners, the one discovered on the beach, was the *Augusta*, Capt. Alex Ure, of Toronto. How her crew was rescued by Capt. A. E. Hare and other Port Credit sailors was told recently. Schooner Days had a New Year’s call from – who do you think? One of the rescued of forty-four years before.

This was James Henry McGlennon, of 64 First avenue, Toronto, one of the McGlennons from Cat Hollow, which includes Lakeport and the vicinity of Colborne, Ont. McGlennons were to be found in most lake schooners last century, and in this they are masters in steam or connected in some way with the water, if it is only at Mariners’ Services, for theirs is an old lake-going family. How Mr. McGlennon was so effectively disguised in the list of *Augusta* survivors that his name was not recognized until he made himself known is curious.

The reporters in 1900 sent the names of the crew in from Port Credit, and by the time they reached The Telegram J. H. McGlennon, Colborne, had become “M. C. Chillon, Port Colborne,” and was so printed. Newspapers are always fumbling Colborne and Port Colborne, although, they are two hundred miles apart by road, but the “Chillon” mess up suggests that they wrote even worse hands in 1900 than now.

Anyway, that is how it came about, and right glad was Schooner Days to see Henry McGlennon still in the flesh and none the worse of his harrowing experiences of his twenties. We had already heard from his brother Frank, of 224 Langley ave., and were hoping for such a call. Mr. McGlennon, a clean cut, active graduate of the old lake school, with captain’s papers, brought along his friend, Capt. Brown, and we had a session.

Mr. McGlennon had been with Capt. Ure many times in the *W.Y. Emery*, the *Augusta*, and his last charge, the *Reuben Doud* – which promises still another story. The *Augusta*’s last voyage was a grim one from the beginning. Soon after they towed out from Charlotte the head of the rudderpost “broomed,” that is broke into splinters so that the steering wheel had no effect on it.

“So how did you get her up the lake?” was asked.

“Hooked tackles on to the backing-chains in the rudder and hove them in through each

quarter – and was it a hard job to plough anything like a straight furrow!”

That was what was wrong when she was seen broaching-to. To get her up the lake at all was a feat of seamanship. She couldn't be steered into shelter under Gibraltar Point apparently, and was lucky to miss stranding there. They saw Port Credit light just after they passed it, in a thinning of the snow. Some of them thought it was the last light in Victoria Park, which was then the first sign of Toronto to any coming from the eastward, but Mr. McGlennon knew better. They tried to haul her out into the lake, rough as it was, but her keel touched on the shale bottom off the Port Credit brickyards and she wouldn't come. The first sea that smacked her after she touched washed away her yawlboat from the stern. It tossed alongside for a time, just out of reach, and washed in on the beach near Marigold Point. Poor Capt. Ure, whose fate it had been to lose the *Highland Chief*, *Isabella* and *Undine* before this, fought in vain to get the *Augusta* clear, trying to wrench her free as the seas lifted her by booming out her sails. It was cold, wet, killing work and all in vain. When the mizzen mast began to sway and the after half of her twisted and writhed while the forward part remained fast and motionless they knew her back was broken, and she was doomed. That was why the appeals for help were so urgent. Young Doad Martin was only a boy, with a great fear of being drowned. The poor lad made great vows for the future, if he could only be saved, but he went decking in the *Bannockburn* – a man had to work to live in the early 1900's – and the *Bannockburn* disappeared in Lake Superior, so he must have been drowned after all.

When the storm died out efforts were made to save the *Augusta* herself. The *Gordon Jerry*, a steam stonehooker, and the *Mary E. Ferguson*, a sailing one, and several others that had never carried coal in their lives came alongside and dug out a few hundred tons from the *Augusta*'s hold, and brought it to Toronto. Pumps got the water down two feet in her hold, and she began to lift. But then a gale blew up again and again she pounded. Her masts fell and she broke up into huge bundles of spike-filled timber.

When the *Antelope* got her 700 tons of coal unloaded she went up to help lighten the *Augusta* off, but her anchors would not hold. Half the *Augusta*'s coal was salvaged. How the third and last cargo got to Toronto will have to be told next.

(Caption) CAPT. J. H. McGLENNON, 64 First avenue, Toronto, last living survivor of the *Augusta*, which carried one of the last three cargoes and left much of it on the beach at Port Credit.

(Caption) The ANTELOPE, with mainsail squatted, made port in safety, blindfold.

(Caption) The JESSIE DRUMMOND, which anchored in the open lake.

(Caption) The AUGUSTA came to grief on the beach. She is here shown with her first load of lumber out of Toronto in 1899, having been refitted by Capt. Ure after a long layup in the Welland Canal.