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Schooner Days, DCCII (702)
By C.H.J. Snider

Garden Island yields Treasure

In a saga of the St. Lawrence (Ryerson Press) D. D. Calvin, Garden Island, born Toronto, architect, relates the history of the great enterprise his grandfather founded in Canada in 1836 as interesting as Snorre Sturleson traces the lives of the Norse Kings in Heimskringla. The Calvin business began with tree cutting and included rafting, towing, town-making, shipbuilding, harbour works, salvaging, forwarding and everything connected with the timber trade from finding the tree in the first to landing it in London. Mr. Calvin has already contributed in "A Corner of Empire" and in magazine articles the best that has been written on rafting, and he has greatly enlarged the knowledge of the far-spreading developments of the Canadian timber trade in this excellent new book.

In addition it is an interesting economic and social study of individual enterprise, for the Calvin saga touches on exploration, population movement, control of output, and all the processes that affect the free until, so to speak it became a parcel purchased and wrapped up for the ultimate customer.

Self reliance

One explanation of the success of the Calvins, judging from reading the saga, appears to be that while the founder and his successors were always able to do things for themselves "The Governor" was his own raftsman, his own steamer Captain as occasion demanded; the firm built their own vessels, rigged and equipped them, made their own timber, over much of this continent; built their own wharfs and pier, did their own wrecking and salvaging, had their own boiler and machine shops and invented or provided their own loading and unloading machinery – they never burdened themselves so heavily with a plant that was not in continuous use that they were smothered in the overhead.

Island Empire

If their steamers were not busy towing their own lumber or their own vessels they were kept busy towing others. The firm was recognized as so authoritative that competitors were glad to follow their lead or to employ them, for they were expert in everything connected with timber, from finding it in the woods to selling it for the English Market. Garden Island was not only their own port and assembly ground for the river trade, it was an emporium, where timber was bought by many of the merchants for rafting and forwarding down the river. The firm organized their own towing so well that they conducted a general towing industry for the Government, which kept down prices to what was considered fair for everyone. They were so expert in getting their own rafts and barges and other craft out of trouble that they were called on continuously to wreck, that is, salvage other vessels. Thus Garden Island was both a private rafting sight, a general shipyard, a salvage depot, and a great forwarding industry. The enterprise

never collapsed. It came to a natural and undisturbed end as the circumstances which had caused its growth changed.

The timber argosy

All Torontonians whose knowledge of the waterfront goes beyond the great transformation affected by the Toronto Harbour Commissioners' improvements will recall the annual spring visit of the Garden Island fleet, to gather up the square timber that had been dumped from the railway sidings into the Bay between what was then Brock St. and the Queens wharf. This timber had been cut during the winter on the few remaining woodlots in old Ontario, and was stored behind booms until the vessels could come for it. Some will ever recall the last raft to be towed out of the harbour for the St. Lawrence, about 1898 at the latest, for not all the timber left here in the holds or on the decks of vessels.

In another number let us look at the great fleet with which the Calvin enterprise populated lake and river .

(Caption) "GARDEN ISLAND" in profile from original sail and spar plan by Joseph Dix, Garden Island, in Mr. D. D. Calvin's possession, along with her lift model. She was 168 feet long, her length being limited by the St. Lawrence canals down which she had to pass.

Passing hails

COLD WATER GASOLINE FIRES AND 3-2-3

We reproduce a lively letter from a Schooner Days admirer to Chief Coroner Dr. A. Smirle Lawson. It was inspired by the *Sirene* yacht tragedy but some of its suggestions have wide application:

Why some drown

"I know what it feels like to be tossed about by the cold waters of Lake Ontario with a lifebelt strapped around me. If I faced the waves they struck me in the face. When I turned on my back the waves broke over me, so that part of the time I was under water. When I would come to the surface, I would spit out what water I could before another wave would submerge me. I kept drinking what water I could before another wave would come along and put me under. By swallowing the water I could not spit out I kept it out of my lungs.

"The cold water rapidly carried off the heat of my body. It seemed to me that it would be only a short time until the end would come. But the sailors on a passing yacht that had been blown out of its course saw and rescued me.

"Now, if I had on something like a closely-fitting union suit of wool, it would keep the heat from being carried away from my skin. Better still, if the woollen suit were soaked in grease or covered with a layer of waterproofing, such as rubber, one in the water would live much longer and stand a better chance of rescue.

Others burn

“I travel frequently on the lake boats to Niagara and Port Dalhousie. Last year, on the Dalhousie boat, in the men’s washroom, I saw a wire basket containing waste paper towels and a lot of toilet tissue paper – about, two bushels of it. Men were smoking and tossing their matches about. What a set-up this was for a small fire and-great panic.

“Did you ever see an automobile burn up? I saw a Model T sedan with only an 8-gallon gas tank burn on the street. The flames shot up to a height of three stories. The heat was so intense that no one could come within fifty feet of the blazing car. The glass in the doors and the windshield was melted into great lumps.

"Eight gallons of gasoline can make a hot and dangerous fire.

“Some of the modern cars carry fifteen to twenty gallons – the kind of cars that are shipped across the lake every day on boats carrying as many as two thousand passengers – sometimes nearly all soldiers going to camp – and unaware of what danger they were in through a leaky gas tank.

“A law should be enacted making it a penalty for an automobile to carry more than say one gallon of gasoline in its tank while on shipboard. There are usually gas stations near the docks. If not they could be established by the transportation companies. Special fire-fighting equipment and chemicals should be immediately placed at hand on the decks of steamers carrying automobiles, and the crew trained in their use.

Three-two-three

“About the close of the last century several hundred persons lost their lives in the disaster at Hoboken, N.Y., when several ships in the harbor caught fire. Suggestion: that the owners of gasoline launches be required to carry fire extinguishers and lifebelts; that the passengers be instructed in the use of flashlight to signal – ‘three-two-three’ – which means the Morse code for SOS. Last year a young couple in a sailboat spent a terrible and dangerous night in the lake. They had a flashlight but did not know how to give the distress signal – something they could have learned in a few minutes. Could not the same signal – three-two-three – be used also on a horn or whistle?

“We have water carnivals from time to time. Might it not be a good idea, instead of giving prizes for swimming and diving to also give prizes for righting an upturned sailboat or canoe, how to make a drag or sea anchor, swim on a lifebelt, give the SOS signal, and other useful things that a sailor should know.

“Well, Doc, it’s time to go but and get some lunch.”

– “OBSERVER.”

(Caption) PORTRAIT OF EASTERN ENTRANCE TO TORONTO HARBOR, COMPLETE WITH FRAME, SATURDAY, JULY 14th, 1945. EASTERN GAP LIGHT, ANOTHER TIME