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## SCOTCH CAP ALOFT AND TAILS FLYING HORSEBOY HAPPENINGS III

THE JENNIE GRAHAM, timber drogher, was left on her beam ends in Lake Huron drifting before the April wind, her captain, cook, one sailor and the two capstan horses drowned. The rest of the crew – including our hero the horseboy – had been picked up in their yawlboat, all but frozen yet still living.

This all happened seventy-four years ago this spring, but the surviving horseboy was built of such good white oak that he has kept on surviving till this day, although he is now over ninety. He is Capt. William D. Graham of St. Catharines, who, after thirty-four years in sail and steam spent another thirty-four years in construction engineering, the last half of the period with the Provincial Hydro. He retired some years ago, but is still a hale, active citizen, with a good grip, a good laugh, and a good fund of stories. What follows is the completion of his account of the capsizing of the large three-masted topsail schooner *Jennie Graham*, of St. Catharines, named after an aunt of his, in Lake Huron, April 30th, 1872, on her way to load square timber at Cheboygan, Mich. The survivors had been rescued in the *Jennie Graham's* yawlboat, by the schooner *Sweepstakes*, a well-known two-master owned in Oakville and sailed at the time by Capt. Ted Thomas. The words are Capt. Graham's, today.

### LIVING LANDED

THE wind being off the Michigan shore, the *Sweepstakes* tacked in close, and landed us with our yawl at a little American port just at dusk of that April day.

The natives used us fine. They put on an extra fire and plenty of eats and drinks. The mate, Mr. McPhee, wanted to report to the owners in St. Catharines at once, but the telegraph line was out of commission. So he secured a bandwagon, filled with straw and good robes. The men in the village lent us overcoats which we afterwards returned to them. We arrived in Port Huron about two a.m., put up at the Magee Hotel.



*This is not a portrait of Capt. Graham when he joined the big schooner in his first lake-faring capacity, but it is a typical fitting-out picture of seventy years ago and of the two-fisted skippers and mates who sailed the old windjammers.*

The next day the wind was S.E. and raining. I was walking with another sailor, coatless, down the street, having left my coat, cap and shoes in the lake when our vessel capsized. The captain of the ferry steamer took us on board to warm quarters. Then walking back I noticed a business sign, "Cochrane, Merchant Taylor." We went in Mr. Cochrane's store.

"Were you in business in Glencoe, Ontario?"

"Yes. What is your name?"

I said "Graham." "Well, would you be a son of Donald?"

My reply was yes, and he asked plenty of questions as to what happened.

He could fit out the man sailor with what he needed from his stock, but not the boy. He bought me shoes, and a Scotch cap, but a coat was hard to find. When about to leave the store he says, "I'll be after trying on this tail coat. There you are, boy!"

So I set sail down street, Scotch cap aloft and tails flying. Many thanks to the tailor's hospitality, which we did appreciate.

That evening the owners arrived, Captain John C. Graham, uncle, and Mr. George Campbell. They located us in the hotel, and handed each of us a ten dollar bill. After having changed it into shin plasters which were issued during the Civil War, I felt like a millionaire, and my telescoped ribs didn't hurt. The U.S.A. money was 28c on the dollar.

The owners chartered the tugs *River Queen* and *Bob Anderson*, the same big tug that had towed us out from Port Huron two days before, and we all went out looking for the lost vessel. The *Graham* was located NE of Lexington, twenty miles or so up the Michigan shore. Still floating on her beam ends, for she was a new light vessel, she was towed back to Sarnia that way and pumped out after being straightened up by the aid of two vessels, tied to the dock. Lines were carried to their mastheads from the mastheads of the *Graham*, lying on the water. Then by heaving on these lines with their capstans the *Graham* was righted by the leverage of her own masts. For a long time we were busy refitting her. The delay was typical of what happened so often in schooners – a gale of a few hours, or a squall of a few minutes, and the vessel out of commission for weeks or months, repairing damage and accumulating wharfage and towage and dockyard tolls.

It took a month to get the *Jennie Graham* in ship-shape, and the horseboy, after visiting his home town Glencoe, returned to fill his berth. After four year's service on this same vessel, he had advanced to an ablebodied seaman. In seven years he was first mate of the schooner *Grantham*.

## **HORSEBOY'S PARADISE**

Asked about living conditions for himself and his horses in the *Jennie Graham*, when he was horseboy, Capt. Graham said:

"The horses used for working the timber capstan, towing through canals, and

occasionally in reefing and making sail, were located on the circle deck, forward of the fore mast. They lived in the open, protected by woollen blankets and canvas covers. They were haltered to the timber capstan, and they had a manger. A circular track was laid on the deck, making a walk around the capstan.

“The drum of the timber capstan was a long oak log, stepped into the keelson in the hold and coming up through the circle deck for five feet above the deck. The circle arm ran through the drum of the capstan, and the horses were hitched to the circle arm, one at each end. The capstan was used both on deck and in the hold, singly or at the same time, to work the timber. In the hold a sailor would take turns on the capstan with the messenger led to the stick which had to be hoisted in, while on deck the horseboy would take turns on the capstan with the quill-falls. The quills were aft, over the stern ports, and the falls led forward to the capstan

“When a stick was being hoisted in from the water the boy would start the horses, holding the slack of the quill-falls, and as the capstan revolved it would wind up the rope and raise the end of the stick of timber to the level of the sill of the timber port in the stern. Then the sailor in the hold, having hooked in on the stick, would shout to the boy to ‘Let go and overhaul!’ often in broken English, for Swedes or Frenchmen were frequent hands in timber droghers. Starting the horses again the capstan would revolve and the wet stick would be dragged along to its place in the hold, guided by breasters and persuaders and peavies and cant-hooks and all the tools of timber working. The boy had his hands full literally, holding slack, easing off and overhauling, and had great difficulty in controlling the straining horses.

“The timber drogher's forecastle was forward of the hold in the fore-peak, or the very eyes of the ship, 7 feet under the circle deck. Entrance to it was by way of the fore-peak, a three-sided box with a sliding top and a two-leaved door in the fourth side, or after end. This scuttle gave all the ventilation and all the daylight the forecastle ever saw. You went down a stair as steep as a ladder. On each side were wooden boxes for the cables, called chain lockers, and above them six bunks, three wooden shelves to starboard, three to port, with vertical leeboards to keep the bedding in when the ship heeled or rolled. The bedding was coarse blue-and-white ticking filled with straw. The pillows were of straw. The ‘sheets’ were dark shanty blankets.

“There were seats six feet long over the chainlockers. The paul-post, backing up the windlass, came down through the forecastle to the keelson. On it, on deck, was always nailed a horseshoe, for luck. From it, down below, hung a tin lamp, fed with coal oil of cheapest grade, smelling and smoking all the time. The four hour watch on deck was our salvation from consumption, for the air in the forecastle, musty with damp straw oil fumes, bilge water, tobacco juice, pipe smoke and foul breath, would choke a rhinoceros. The horseboy had it over the sailors, for he was little enough to sleep in the horses’ manger, where if it was cold the air was clean.

## **SEQUEL IN BURLINGTON**

FORTY-ONE years after the capsizing, says Capt. Graham, the writer was in the town of

Burlington, Ont., when a sudden squall came up, and we took refuge in the railway station. An aged gentleman remarked: "This squall reminds me of one in 1872, and rescuing the crew of the schooner *Jennie Graham*."

For a moment I was like a pillar of salt without looking back.

"Sir," I asked, "will you tell me who you are, and what you know about that accident on Lake Huron?"

He said: "I was mate of the schooner *Sweepstakes*, and picked up the survivors."

"Who did you pick up first?"

"A stripling of a boy."

Being then fifty I had to tell him that I was the horseboy. Wilford Henderson was his name, and he was very much affected; so there and then we made a date to get together. We met at his residence with a few old salts, and several main braces were well and truly spliced.

Capt. Graham had more adventures ere he left the *Jennie Graham*, and next week we hope to hear of another.