

Toronto Telegram, March 8, 1947
Schooner Days, DCCLXXXVI (786)
By C.H.J. Snider

OLD TIMES IN OLD SOUTH BAY

“Schooner Days,” says Mrs. Sarah Lize, “How is this for a story?”



With the gravel in his lap and his head and feet sticking up out of the water.

AT the extreme end of South Bay, is a little hamlet known now as Port Milford. At the time of telling, it was called Coopers' Dock. This little village was practically owned by James Cooper, always known as “Jimmie,” and his brother William. There was a small farm, an old-fashion brick farm house with a verandah facing the bay. Beyond the house, across the road leading to the dock below a very high hill, was his general store, comprising everything from a needle to an anchor, or a barrel of flour to a roll of print or cotton. At this time “Jimmie,” the magnate whose industry had created all this and much more, also owned two scows. One was very small boat, square bow and stern. It was used for carrying stone for building up his dock and roads. It was called a scow or punt, just as you like. It had one sail, no jib.

Jimmie had another scow, much larger. She carried one large sail and two jibs and had a small cabin, a sharp prow and square stern, and steered by a tiller. She was called the *Minnie of Coopers' Dock*. Jimmie also had a handyman who sailed his scows and did general work about his store and home, named Arch Church. He would have been nicknamed “Artichoke” if the neighborhood had been familiar with that vegetable. He was a very tall man, quite capable in his position.

In the year 1877, along the last of July, bustling Jimmie wanted some flour, sugar and several other items for his store. His trading business was between Prince Edward County and

Kingston. He told Arch to look up some one to go with him to get the goods in Kingston and not be long about it.

ARCH AND ARCHIE

Now Arch knew of a boy about eighteen or thereabout, his name Archie Hicks. The lad was fond of adventure and was keyed up to go. They pushed out the old *Minnie* from the dock, got the mainsail on and hoisted the jibs, Arch at the tiller and the lad Archie forward to mind the ropes, he not knowing one halyard from another. It was about eight o'clock in the morning.

All went well until they got to the Gap leading to Kingston. The wind hauled around and she did not do so well. When they got through the Gap they ran aground on one of the Three Brothers' Islands close to the entrance from the Bay of Quinte to Lake Ontario.

Well, they worked and shoved by pole and oar until they got her adrift again, by employment of a whole lot of strength and swear words. They got to Kingston about five p.m. and blew for the bridge across the Cataraqui River near the Kingston market. There was a lot of schooners in, tied up to the dock, some upper lake ones. Percy Thurston sailed one of them, no matter which. How the sailors laughed and shouted when the *Minnie* sailed through the draw! Capt. Arch being a very important man, came through in great style on purpose. Archie Hicks, the young lad, said it was the fun of his life.

They were supposed to get the load and return as quickly as possible, but there happened to be an exhibition down in the park known now as Sir John A. Macdonald Park, so Capt. Arch said to the young lad Archie, "Let's go and see, I saw where there were bicycles for rent, so let's each get one and go up and see the doings."

THE HI-CYCLE RIDE

Now the young lad had ridden one of those old-fashioned high wheels, but Capt. Arch never was on one, so they started, got their mounts. Young Archie was off like the wind, thinking his captain was close astern, until he heard some men laughing. When he looked back he saw Capt. Arch coming down the hill at a great' rate, some times his feet were on the pedals and the rest of the time in the air. It was a circus. In the end he ran into a man and his daughter and when young Archie reached him he was trying to get out of paying a fine and damages by blarney and smiles.

When they got back to the *Minnie*, it was too late to start home. But early the next morning they got their cargo stowed, came out through the bridge, got out on the lake, had a fairly good breeze and made very good time. The captain said, "We will make Jimmie smile yet."

But when they got through the Gap, the wind died out and the lake was as calm as a dish. Capt. Arch locked the tiller with his feet and slumbered at intervals. Young Archie was supposed to be on watch forward. Instead he was trying to raise the wind with snores. It was one o'clock when they got through the Gap, and headed across South Bay. Gradually time wore on. About

four they were rounding Hicks Flats and when they got across the bay to Cooper's Dock it was dark.

Jimmie was roaring. Capt. Arch said "Did you get the squall?" Jimmie said: "There was no squall here." Arch said: "That's funny. It took us out in the lake." Young Archie knew it was a darned lie, but he never squealed.

HAD HIM GRAVELLED

So the next day Jimmie sent them with the small scow for some gravel. They got over to Smith's Bay all right and got her two-thirds full of gravel, which they scooped out of the shallow water. Capt. Arch thought they had better change to a different place for the rest of the load. He got back in the hind end seat. The old scow began to settle aft and all the gravel ran aft also, and when the young lad looked up the Capt. was sitting on the bottom of the bay, in the stern with the gravel in his lap and his head and feet sticking out of the water. He swam and waded ashore and so did young Archie. They had to walk ten miles to get home coming round by the shore. Arch Church nearly lost his berth with Jimmie Cooper and Archie Hicks just got two dollars.