

Toronto Telegram, April 23,1933
Schooner Days LXXXIV. (84)
By C.H.J. Snider

"PLEASE, GRANDMA TAKE CARE OF MY BABY"

Prince Edward is an old settled county, mainly of United Empire Loyalist stock, and the cemetery at Cherry Valley looks like that of a metropolis, from the many shafts of granite and marble that decorate its expanse, glowing green now with the new grass of April.

Among the tombstones which will undoubtedly be visited and admired to-morrow, when the annual Mariners' Service is held in Cherry Valley Church, all decorated with lake flags and ship models for the occasion, none gives more modest proclamation of the family loyalty enshrined than the fine granite block in memory of Capt. Joseph D. Hartgrove, of South Bay, deputy reeve of South Marysburg.

To interpret the brief memorial one must turn again to the invaluable Capt. Nelson Palmateer, of Picton, frequently quoted hitherto in Schooner Days. This is the story which he has possibly told already at one of the Mariners' Services, or perchance will mention again on Sunday.

IN THE summer of 1893 a promising and prospering young mariner of Picton, David John Farrington, then in his twenty-ninth year, invested his accumulated savings in the fine American schooner *River Side*. The *River Side* was a sister ship of the schooner *West Side*, of Oswego, and sometimes, according to Capt. Palmateer, confused with her; but the *River Side* had three masts and the *West Side* only two.

Like most "sister Ships," these vessels were of the same family, but not twins.

Old sailors are fond of propounding the mystery of why the Such-and-Such and the So-and-So, built in the same yard from the same moulds and like as two peas, sailed so differently. One, they tell you, could always beat the other by-the-wind, or one wasn't worth a hoot wung out, or sulked in stays, and so on.

There are other answers, but as a rule the explanation is that the "two peas" weren't twins at all. The builder may have had to shorten here, or spread there, to accommodate some difficulty in material, the tons of timber built in must have varied in quality, and the rigger had similar problems. It takes the tapeline to tell.

It does in the case of these two Side-named schooners launched at the same time (1870) in Oswego, where all the streets lead to the water. The *West Side*'s registered dimensions are 138 feet length, 26 feet beam, 10 feet depth of hold, 324 tons gross and 308 net. The *River Side*'s are 137 feet length, 25 feet 8 inches beam, 11 feet depth of hold, 278 tons gross, 264 net – a surprising difference in registered tonnage, seeing that she was a foot deeper and really the larger vessel. The figures are from the U. S. Marine Register of 1885.

All this, however, is holding up the story.

David John Farrington, as he was known from boyhood in Prince Edward, was a nephew

of Deputy Reeve Hartgrove of South Marysburg. Joseph D. Hartgrove had sailed from his boyhood, and risen to the command of schooners. His brother, Capt. W. H. Hartgrove, was at this time master and owner of the schooner *Typo*, of Detroit, which afterwards, on the 14th of October, 1899, sank in collision with the steamer *Ketchum* on Lake Huron, drowning four. Joseph Hartgrove married Julia Farrington, a sister of David John's father, Capt. Wesley Farrington.

David John Farrington had established Detroit connections before buying the *River Side*, and Capt. J. M. Jones of that city was a partner with him in the purchase of the former Oswego schooner. Deputy Reeve Hartgrove was still in his full vigor at this time, being 55 or 56. He had given up sailing in 1881, and, realizing the ambition of so many sailors, bought a farm in South Bay. But his nephew, needing all the assistance he could command in this enterprise, where he was both master and owner, persuaded him to come to Detroit and sail with him as mate. Capt. Farrington was not unused to three-masters, having sailed the schooner *Maize* before buying the *River Side*, but the season was drawing in to the fall, when as everyone knows, a "good man" is priceless in a sailing vessel.

Capt. Farrington was not long married. His bride, formerly Miss Annie O'Hagan, was a daughter of a well known Prince Edward county vessel man. Capt. Farrington took her with him in the *River Side* to act as cook, and the young wife, zealous to help her husband to success in their new venture, gladly undertook these duties. They had a bonny baby, and this they left with an adoring grandmother, Mrs. Jane Farrington of South Bay, Capt. Farrington's mother.

Capt. Joseph D. Hartgrove, retired, would not see his nephew hampered. He not only came himself but brought along his son John as a seaman; so Prince Edward was well represented "out of Detroit," with the two Hartgroves, father and son, and the Farrington family in the *River Side*, and Capt. W. H. Hartgrove in the *Typo*.

Early in a mid-October morning – it was Friday the thirteenth – the *River Side* sailed from Detroit for Kelley's Island in Lake Erie, and there loaded cut stone for Tonawanda. At Kelley's Island two of her crew, William Raymond and William Whelan, left her, without giving reasons. Eli Paige and young John Farrington, the other men before the mast, stuck to the ship. Capt. Farrington telegraphed to Sandusky for hands to take the vacant places. As soon as these men came across from Sandusky on the steamer, he sailed for Tonawanda. The great squares of cut stone, each weighing tons, had been carefully dunnaged with loose lumber to keep their corners from bursting out the curving sides of the vessel.

And then – nothing happened.

The *River Side* simply did not arrive at her destination. She had been seen above Cleveland, coming down Lake Erie, everything seemingly well. There came a hard gale and heavy head winds from the eastward, and at first the delay in getting to the foot of Lake Erie was attributed to these. But the easterly gale blew out and the wind came fair from the west, and still no *River Side*.

Then someone walking along the beach at Geneva in New York State, not far from Buffalo, saw a bottle rolled up by the waves. When it was opened there was found in it a torn piece of brown wrapping paper, such as is used for ship's groceries. On it was written in pencil:

“Whoever finds this please write to Mrs. Jane Farrington, South Bay, Ont., that the *River Side* is full of water and we are all likely to be lost in Lake Erie. Please grandma take care of my baby, for we will all soon be drowned. ANNIE FARRINGTON.”

That was all, and too much. It spread tragedy through Prince Edward county, from Picton to Point Traverse.

Capt. W. H. Hartgrove, master and owner of the *Typo*, reconstructed from his own experience what had probably happened to his brother and nephews on board the *River Side*. Bound down Lake Erie, loaded deep with stone, a schooner would not keep banging away at a head wind if there were much sea; she would square off before it and run for Pigeon Bay, where Point Pelee thrusts out its long tongue of sand into the lake, and gives a lee from easterly gales.

So to Pigeon Bay he directed his inquiries. The *River Side* had not been there. But some steamer had reported seeing spars sticking up out of the water near the Dummy, that wooden beacon without a light, which marks the approach to the Pelee Passage.

Capt. Hartgrove got a diver and had these spars examined. In twenty-five feet of water the diver found a schooner, with the name *River Side* of Oswego on her stern. But there were no bodies in her. Lake Erie had swept away the Prince Edward families and the Sandusky strangers.

The fine monument in Cherry Valley Cemetery is not a cenotaph, a tomb to the absent. Capt. Joseph D. Hartgrove's body rose in the spring. He was all lashed up in the oilskin coat he was wearing when the *River Side* went down under him. None of the other bodies were ever found. Capt. Hartgrove belonged with Capt. Palmateer to a lodge of the Ancient Order of United Workmen, since absorbed by the Foresters. The order had very obligingly paid his insurance of \$2,000 to Mrs. Julia Hartgrove in the winter, before the body was found. It was brought back for burial in Cherry Valley, and later the granite monument was erected. It is a mute but magnificent testimonial to that family loyalty which called an old captain from the honors and comforts or retired life ashore to wrestle the waves again with his son, as mate and man before the mast, in their kinsman's command, and which kept a young husband and wife in death not divided; a monument, too, to the brotherly love which sought until it found.

And “Grandma” did take care of Annie Farrington's baby, as long as breath was in her body. To Mrs. Jane Farrington her daughter-in-law's dying appeal was a sacred trust; and when she died relatives carried on her kindness. Little Eunice Farrington had the best of care. She grew to be a sweet girl of fourteen or fifteen, and then “lung trouble,” that bane of budding youth, carried her off. She died at South Bay. Capt. Palmateer knew her well.

“I have known the family all my life, and such good people they all were,” is that lake veteran's eloquent tribute.

PASSING HAILS

THE NELLIE HUNTER.

Recent references to this schooner produced a pleasant visit from a son of Capt. Jacob Ackerman and an old copy of the Canadian Pictorial Illustrated News, with an engraving in which the *Nellie Hunter* (left) and the American schooner *Gearing* (right) have prominence. The illustration is an incident in Toronto Bay, June 18, 1885, when Capt. Murney Ackerman, an uncle of the present owner of the picture, and at the time master of the *Nellie Hunter*, rescued Ned Hanlan with the ship's yawlboat when the great oarsman capsized in his shell.

THE OCEAN WAVE AGAIN.

Sir, – In your Saturdays' issues you have a page on which is found a topic called Schooner Days.

An article which spoke of the vessel "*Ocean Wave*" bears a certain amount of interest to me, as the captain of that schooner was my grandfather. I have been taking your paper for only two weeks and would like to know what was in a previous issue, or issues.

The matter was drawn to my attention by my mother, who has asked me to write to you for further information, she was the only child of Captain Wm. (Banty) Martin, and the only information she ever received regarding the wrecking of this vessel was given to her by Capt. Jas. McVinney, who had followed Capt. Martin out of Trenton harbor on what proved to be his last voyage. I am quite sure that Capt. Palmateer may have been one of the last to speak with Capts. Martin and Brokenshire, the owners of the *Ocean Wave*, but the fact that they piloted Capt. McVinney, of the schooner *Garbaldi* [sic] through the Bay of Quinte (this was not familiar to him) leads us to believe that he no doubt was the last to see these two able seamen alive.

However, I am interested in getting all the information. I can for my mother, who has had very little, she was but eleven years old at the time, her mother having died some years previous, and news was slow to travel in those days, and would appreciate it if you would arrange for me to get in touch somehow with the writer of these articles, also with this gentleman, Capt. Palmateer.

We appreciate your paper, and trust that you will oblige or rather help us in the above request.

Thanking you in anticipation.
MRS. HELEN E. L. UPPER,
Kitchener, Ont.

Mrs. Upper has received Capt. Palmateer's address and The Telegram's earlier references to the *Ocean Wave*.

Captions:

SCHOONER DAYS IN TORONTO HARBOR 50 YEARS AGO

The Nellie Hunter was then white-hulled and in her prime. In her later years she was black, with red or lead-color bottom and a smart yellow beading under the chin-wale. She was built in 1875.

“RIVER SIDE’S” SISTER IN SARNIA BAY IN THE ’70’s

The West Side is the white schooner nearest you, to the left. Imperial Oil photo.