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Schooner Days CMIII (903)
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What happened to the *Bavaria*'s eight?

LAKE schooner days offer mystery as intriguing as the Marie Celeste episodes for any on the ocean. What happened to the crew of the Calvin Company's three-masted timber drogher *Bavaria* of Kingston sixty years ago is still unsolved.

On May 29th, 1889 after a two-day gale, the *Bavaria* was found sitting bolt upright on the Great Galloo. This is a twelve-mile island towards the foot of Lake Ontario, south and west of the Main Ducks, and in American waters.

To the eye there was nothing wrong with the schooner except she had no yawlboat on the davits of her stern. Every rope was in place, her sails all stowed. She looks as though at anchor, close in, with the crew gone ashore in their boat. That is what the captain of the steam-barge *Armenia*, of the same line, sent in search of her, hoped was the case. He blew, but there was no response to his whistle, but a piping like a bird's song. Boarding the silent schooner, the Armenians found a canary chirruping lustily in its cage in the cabin; a batch of bread in the galley oven, but the fire out; the captain's papers and his freight money in his desk, and a new spar, on which work had begun, in place on its trestles, with the shavings from it in the scuppers. The hold was full of water, which was, of itself, what might be expected of a vessel that had bumped to a standstill on a stony bottom.

They inquired of the Galloo light-keeper and of the farmers on the island, but these were positive – no yawlboat and no crew had come ashore, and no one had been visible in nor near the vessel since the morning light revealed her.

Puzzling greatly the *Armenia* pumped the *Bavaria* out and towed her home. Garden Island was wild with excitement already, and the arrival of the *Bavaria* in the condition she was in only added to the wonder. The *Armenia* had been dispatched with the meagre information that a Calvin tow was "in trouble up the lake" and the *Bavaria* had disappeared. What was known ultimately was this:

The green-painted steam-barge *D. D. Calvin* was coming down the lake with three of the firms' vessels in tow, all laden with timber or lumber. Astern of her was the black tow-barge *Valencia*, without sails. Fast to her was the full-

rigged *Bavaria* (her paint was black above and lead color below, with a white covering board), her sails stowed for towing. Last in the tow was the sister schooner *Norway*, which had been cut down to three lower sails and three headsails after a disastrous capsizing in the Great Gale of 1880.

Fifteen miles from Point Peter the seas, to quote the master of the *Valencia*, ran in mountains, and the *Valencia* parted her towline, so that the steamer lost her whole tow at once. It was dark and she dare not attempt to recover them in the sea that was running.

She blew to the schooners to make sail. The *Norway* did so, and reached Kingston, with the first word of trouble. She had lost her deck-load and had a hard time.

The *Bavaria's* towline parted or was cut to avoid collision, immediately after the *Valencia's*. She fell into the trough of the sea and rolled so violently it seemed impossible to get sail on her to give her steerage way. They were all rolling their deckloads overboard and the lake was filled with lumber. When daylight came she was halfway between Main Duck and the Great Galloo, still in the trough of the sea and unmanageable, with no sail set. She seemed waterlogged.

This was what *Valencia* saw of her consort. Her master had prudently let go his anchors, with a great scope of chain. They caught bottom four miles offshore, and she dragged in close to Long Point. Cap. Leroy Spafford, of the Point Traverse life-saving service, bravely put out with his lifeboat to take the crew off, but they as bravely refused to leave her, and after hours of peril the *D. D. Calvin*, able at last to make head against the sea, pulled her off the Point in the nick of time and towed her to Garden Island.

Those missing from the *Bavaria* were Capt. John Marshall, of Kingston; First Mate Felix Campeau, Second Mate John Snell, and seaman William McGarity, all of Garden Island; Sandy Berry, seaman, of Pittsburg; Archie Borley and his brother, Ed. Borley, of St. Paul's Bay; and Bella Hauffman of Ernestown, the cook. Their disappearance is a mystery yet, and always will be.

The light keeper at Point Peter that morning had seen a yawl boat with several people in it capsized. "Wes" Clemes of Port Hope told Marshall Spafford of Point Traverse that he was wheeling in the steam-barge *Nicaragua* that day, coming down the lake with two barges in tow, and they sighted a yawl boat; only two men in it then. The *Nicaragua* made several attempts to round up to leeward of the boat, for the men were waving in distress; but the steamer being a hard steerer, and encumbered with her two barges, could never be brought head to wind and had to abandon the effort.

The following day in Simon Davis' fish tug, George Bongard of Picton, still living, sighted an empty water-logged yawlboat on the way from the Main Duck to Cape Vincent. They picked it up. There was no one in it. But it was the *Bavaria's*.

The eight were all drowned. But why did they leave the *Bavaria* in that yawlboat in midlake, when the vessel herself was able to make her way to the Great Galloo without throwing the cabin canary out of his cage?

This is not a quiz, but a consideration of evidence always all too meagre. Supposition is that the tragedy began with the towline. In casting off the *Norway's* line, or getting in the *Bavaria's* own, after the *Valencia* went adrift, the best men in the ship may have been swept overboard. Easy to happen with a surging line in the dark. The others may have dropped the yawlboat in an attempt to rescue them; or the surging towline may have unhooked in front of the davits on the stern. In some way it got into the water, and they got into it. That the cook went with them would suggest that they panicked by the loss of the captain or mates and believed their own vessel about to founder, rolling herself to pieces in the trough of the sea, they would hope to reach the *Valencia*, *Norway* or *Calvin*, all within a few cable lengths. Why did they not? Did their one oar break? In the long agony which followed, they may have been capsized again and again, or dropped singly and been thrown overboard to lighten the waterlogged boat until only the two were left, and she may have capsized again with these.

But there was nothing wrong with the *Bavaria*. She was sold soon after this, and taken to Lake Huron, where she carried lumber from Georgian Bay to Sarnia or Detroit. She was sailed by an old Irishman, Capt. Mahony, out of Saugeen or Southampton till around the end of the 20th century.

(Caption) The *BAVARIA* entering Kincardine harbor long after the mystery has been forgotten.