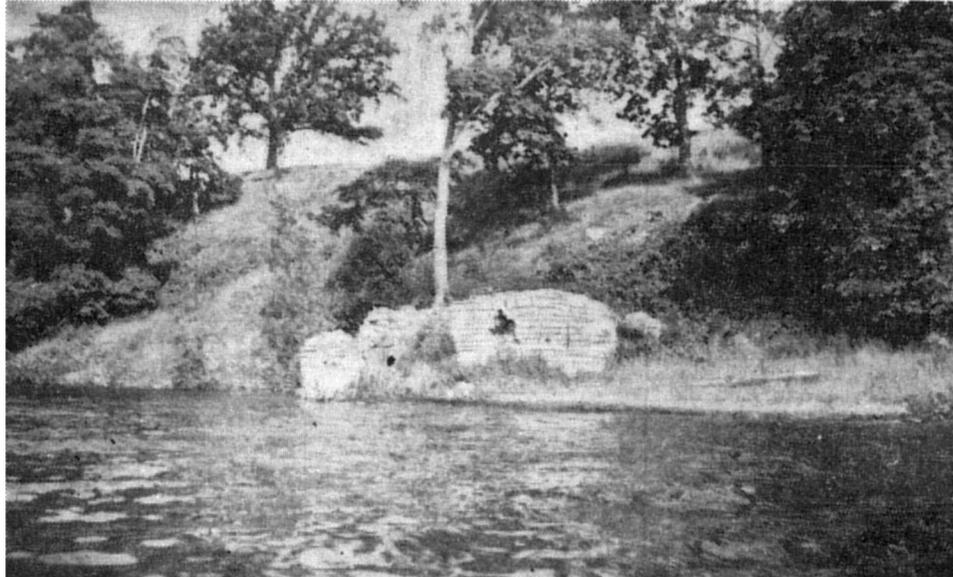


**The Toronto Telegram, December 9, 1950**  
**Schooner Days CMLXXXI (981)**  
**By C.H.J. SNIDER**

## **SHIPS OF MILFORD**



*Warehouse foundations at Milford. Skeletons of schooners Flora Jane and the Fleetwing, lie under this bank.*

Now let us get back to Port Milford, Prince Edward County's Inland sea-port which built schooners and steamers.

The Black River runs between high and timbered banks towards the north shore of South Bay. Its strand of oak and pine gave it its name, and choked it with fallen timbers. Nevertheless, under the drive of Dr. Howey Bredin, Capt. Wm. Ellis, shipbuilder, and the other enterprising Milfordians, the river was cleared of logs and dredged to a depth of 8 feet all the way back to the Milford dams. The village as already said, was 3 miles inland.

To get rid of the high spots they used oxen ploughing along the banks towing scows with scoop shovels and ploughs chained to them. When they came to the county road winding around from Milford to Waupoos, and crossing the river by a wooden bridge, they were not stuck. The bridge would hardly give clearance for a canal boat. They rebuilt the bridge and its approaches, so that it could be run back on rollers to let tall masted schooners through. Horsepower was used to pull it over and pull it back.

This was early enterprise as lofty in conception as the Manchester ship canal, though humbler in execution. Ships were built in Milford, at Cole's Landing, beyond the village, where there was an ashery, a little factory shipping potash and soap. The first vessel is said to have been the *Mary* of Milford, a little schooner put together with little pins and tree nails in the place of iron fastenings. The bank was so high where the *Mary* was built that they had to put her on sleighs and teams hauled her a mile around to the launching place.

## **Tragedy**

There was also an *Ellen* of Milford, possibly earlier. Two uncles of the late Amos McDonald, Warden of Prince Edward and long ago keeper of the Wicked Point light, were drowned in the schooner *Ellen* near the Scotch Bonnet, 80 years ago or more. She had loaded fish in Little Sandy Bay for Hamilton, and the McDonald boys went along with the cargo, to sell it at the head of the lake. Schooner, fish and super cargoes disappeared. All that was ever found was a broken mast off the Bonnet.

There was a third *Ellen*, (or perhaps all 3 were the same, ) trading into Port Whitby in 1847, and carrying lumber to Oswego at 6 shillings and 3 pence a thousand feet. Ed. Mouck was her master and that is a Price Edward county sailing family's name.

## **Silver Sprays 56 years apart**

In 1880 a steamer named the *Silver Spray* was built at Milford by Captain John Fagan, at Cole's landing, and in 1936 another *Silver Spray* was built in the village, a 40 foot motor boat intended to carry fish to Oswego. How the last one got to the lake is not known – unless it was by truck – for the roller bridge had long since disappeared, and the Black River was said to be again choked with fallen timbers. But, where there's a will there's always a way, in Milford.

Milford was a port of registry in the 1870's, but not all the vessels registered there were built there. Some where far away and others were near by.