

Toronto Telegram, December 16, 1950
Schooner Days CMLXXXII (982)
By C.H.J. Snider

"PACKMANS PORT"

Think the relationship was closer than in:- Sisters and Brothers have I none, But that man's father is my Father's son. The *NELSON BLOOM* was a towbarge when she helped relieve the coal famine in Toronto in December, 1902, but she had a schooner's foresail and staysail and, as we recollect, a spike mizzenmast which may have been bare and could have carried canvas, a not unusual barge rig 50 years ago. She was built up forward as though she was a steamer, and had a good bold bow. Have I answered your question, or does the identity of that man throw you out?

That as well as the ambitions of the little village of Milford in Prince Edward County a 100 years ago to be a fresh water seaport, was among the reasons for Port Milford, facing the sunrise off South Bay. Sometimes, too, would the foreign Chapmen come. 'And beach their dromond in the Sandy Bay. Morris, Earthly Paradise.' The quotation is supplied by an ardent admirer of Prince Edward and most helpful friend of Schooner Days, Helen Merrill Egerton, whose own verse have often illuminated our otherwise dour and forbidding explorations. A drummond, Mrs. Egerton also quotes, in ancient times was a ship with rowers and one sail. Our own fancy is that dromond and dromedary both come from the Greeks, the one being a swift vehicle of transport by land. The dromonds of Milford ranged from little scow sloops to three masted schooners. Before going on with Port Milford let me express further gratitude to Mrs Egerton for making available her notes on chapmen, who, as much as the village ambitions, had a part in the port's progress.

The chapman has vanished from the language – except for poetry – and from being a travelling merchant of old has become the pedlar and door-bell ringer of to-day. Mrs. Egerton points out that in Upper Canada, as early as 1798, an effort was made to license chapmen by a Bill presented to Parliament, at (York) Toronto, under the title, "A Bill for licensing Hawkers, Pedlars and Petty Chapmen," which after having been read several times and sent up to the Legislative Council for their concurrence in passing was dropped. In 1807, an attempt in the same direction was successful, and a Bill entitled: "An Act for Granting His Majesty Duties on Licenses to Hawkers, Pedlars, and Petty Chapmen and other trading persons there-in mentioned," received the Royal Assent. At first, says Mrs. Egerton, quoting Canniff, there was little money in circulation in Upper Canada. But few of the refugees, or disbanded soldiers had any when they entered the wilderness. The Government was constantly paying a certain sum to troops at Kingston or Newark, and to the retired half pay officers. The few who could command money were placed in a position of greater comfort as soon as provisions and merchandise were brought to the new settlement. Mainly, however, trading was carried on by exchanging one commodity for another. Probably the first article for trade was the ticket for grants of land in the back concessions, often parted with so cheaply. The settlers required clothing, grain for sowing, and stock; these wants in time led to trade, two kinds of which were introduced. One was carried on by merchants established at Kingston, the other by peddlers, who would come from Albany with their pack in a canoe or small batteau, and who plied their calling along the bay shore from clearing to clearing. Both the merchant at Kingston, who waited for his customer to come to him, and the pedlar who sought customers, asked for their wares only grain or any other produce. But wheat was

desired above all others.

It was an event of no little importance to the backwoodsman's family when the pedlar's canoe or batteau came along and halted before the log cabin on the shore. Even when their circumstances would not permit them to buy, it was a luxury to view the things so temptingly displayed. The toil-worn farmer with well patched trousers, would turn with an inward sigh from a piece of cloth which could not be bought. The grown up daughters gazed wistfully but hopelessly at the bright calico prints, more valuable in their eyes than the choicest silks are to their descendants today. But the calico dress was enjoyed by few until it was bought for a wedding dress. Frequently some article of family use was exchanged for goods which were deemed of more use. The trade of merchants at Kingston steadily increased; but not as cash business.

Port Milford was not, as might have been supposed, at Black River bluff, where the ox-dredged and roller-bridged stream came into South Bay from the mill-dams of Milford, 3 miles up. It was miles further into the bay – Black River bluff being at its very mouth – and here the bay began to shoal up into marsh, with Flats Point making out from its eastern side. There was good water in here, fathoms even inside Flats Point, good holding ground if you were careful to anchor on the mud and not in the weeds, and shelter from every wind. So wharves were pushed out, first for wood-docks for the early steamers, then for loading farmers grain and country produce and unloading the requirements of the sturdy thriving country.

Chief among the wharfs was Cooper Brothers, where an itinerant packman, James Cooper, who came to the country from Kingston with all his stock in a satchel, had built up a country wide business with his brother William's assistance. He had a big general store, stone warehouses for grain and goods and docks for fuelling and for handling merchandise. Below Coopers were other wharves, of the Church brothers, and there was good ground for shipbuilding between them, under the high bank. James Cooper built two vessels and several others were built at Port Milford although few built there used its name on their arch boards.

Passing Hails

Enjoyed your stories of the *JESSIE DRUMMOND*, airmails R.E. Williams, care of Demerara Bauxite Co., Mackenzie, British Guiana. My grandfather Beatty grained her cabin doors, Sam Beatty, whom you mentioned in an ice-boat story, is an uncle. I intended to call on you when in Toronto last summer, but rail strike kind of messed up my program. I have an original photo of the *MAPLE LEAF* taken in 1909. Will have it copied if you are interested. Also a couple of old steel engravings of Toronto waterfront near G.& W distillery (God Bless Them). I do not know if they are correct or not or are just imaginary on the part of the artist. Please tell us what happened to the *REUBEN DOUD*, *DUNDEE*. Answer:- Have several pictures of the schooner *MAPLE LEAF* already, thanks.

Sir:- Referring to Schooner Days under date Nov. 4 you mentioned the *NELSON BLOOM* as a big boy from up above. Dana T. Bowen states that the steamer *METEOR*, which collided with the steamer *PEWABIC* in August, 1865, later became a tow barge named the *NELSON BLOOM*. Were these Blooms any relation? Kind regards.

W.M. Prentice,

Answer at first of article.