

The Old Ships

The once great firm of John Munn and Co. had for its first vessel one called the William Johnston of the firm of Baine Johnston and Co., which is still flourishing. Her origin Munn was for several years previous to starting business with Capt. Panton in the office of Baine Johnston and Co.

The firm's second vessel seems to have been the British Queen named to commemorate the year that Queen Victoria ascended the throne. The William Johnston was built in 1837 and the British Queen in 1832, both at Aberdeen, Scotland.

The Barque Clutha which was lost in 1923 was the lag, of a great fleet of her class. She was built at Aberdeen in 1881 and had a remarkable period of service, having run for 43 years. She was built in days when material and workmanship were of the highest quality. Vessels were built to be staunch and seaworthy and to have good sailing qualities.

The Clutha was brought to this country by Capt. Henry Bailey in 1861 and he made several quick passages in her. He died on board the Clutha in 1866. She was sold to Capt. Joyce in 1866 and he ran with the firm of Bishop and Monroe until 1915 when she was purchased by Crosbie and Co. In Capt. Joyce's record there was no mishap nor damage to any cargo.

In the mid fifties, a well known ship builder, Michael Kearney built ships at Harbour Grace among which were the Naomi, Arabella Tarbet and the Rothesay. Each was built at the foot of Victoria Street and was launched across the street into the waters of the harbour.

These launchings were great events of their day. The Naomi was lost at Outer Cove on January 18th, 1833 with all hands and only one body was recovered.

The Arabella Tarbet was in command of Capt. Richard Kearney, brother of the great ship builder. She was a fast sailing ship and had the record of making a voyage from New York to Harbour Grace with a load of flour in seven days.

The Rothesay was launched on January 21st, 1852 at Harbour Grace, she went ashore at Western Bay near Bay de Verde but was got off, repaired and renamed the Terra Nova, she was lost at Indian Tickle in the great Labrador gale of October 9th, 1867.

The Glengarry which was lost at the ice was commanded by Capt. Hanrahan. Her story is that she was one of the staunchest vessels that ever sailed out of this port in the early seventies. At one time she was 110 days out from Cagliari, Sicily and was one of the few ships that arrived safely from the Mediterranean, thanks to her hearty crew.

The brig, Belle was lost in 1878 and once made the run to Oporto in eight days. She had to run over the bar to the amazement of the Portuguese and made a miraculous escape.

Newcooks of New Harbour and Pitman's of New Port were famed shipbuilders of that era. Newcooks built the Fleetwing. Capt. Bailey made one voyage to Brazil in 22 days. She was condemned in 1873. The Barque Queen was also built by Newcooks. Two runs to Brazil were made in remarkably quick time, the first under Capt. Bailey and the second under Capt. John Munn, both voyages taking only 21 days each. In 1838 the Queen made the round trip from Brazil to Harbour Grace, discharged a cargo of fish at Brazil, loaded sugar which she delivered at Liverpool, England and back to Harbour Grace in 10 days.

These ships and hundreds of others prosecuted the Labrador and seal fishery and the foreign going trade during the winter months. To give some idea of the business done by the firm of Panton and Munn, late John Munn and Co. from 1871 to 1894, the year of the crash, the average amount of codfish shipped from Labrador alone by that firm was 178,000 quintals besides the thousands of barrels of her-

More Of The Old Ships

HARBOUR GRACE—On December 31st, 1860, the topsail schooner Rose of Torridge, sailed out of Harbour Grace bound for Gibraltar.

All went well with fair wind and full sail until on January 4th, 1864, in latitude 36 degrees north and 20 degrees west, Captain Fitzgerald sighted a large steamship showing a distress signal which read "the ship is sinking and we wish to abandon her."

A tremendous sea was running at the time and nothing but the utmost skill of Capt. Fitzgerald could enable him to bring his little schooner near enough to take off the crew of the steamer.

After six hours of sailing and during which time the crew of the schooner kept throwing bags of oil on the troubled water in order to keep the sea calm, the boats of the steamer were floated in the water and the crew of 26 men were taken off safely and put aboard the Rose of Torridge.

The ship proved to be the Cassandra, bound for Lagos, Africa, to Rotterdam. The greatest difficulty was experienced in getting the men from the steamer to the schooner and especially was this so in the case of the captain who weighed nineteen stone. A few minutes after they had been taken off the steamer, she pitched head foremost and sank beneath the waves. During the rescue, Captain Fitzgerald was struck by a block which fell from aloft and which made a terrible gash over his eye, but his powerful physique stood him in good stead and he squared away on his little craft and arrived at Gibraltar on January 12th, where the crew of the Cassandra were handed over to the German consul to whom the captain made a statement of all that had occurred and received the full thanks of that official in return. The Rose of Torridge then sailed for Leghorn and from there to Tripani from where she sailed with a load of salt for John Munn and Co. The Newfoundland coast being surrounded with ice Capt. Fitzgerald thought it prudent to put into St. John's and on his arrival there was informed by the German consul, R. H. Prowse, that the German consul had written him to ask what Capt. Fitzgerald would prefer, a watch, sextant, binoculars or a medal, in recognition of his service in saving the lives of 26 of His Imperial Majesty's subjects on the high seas at the time of the sinking of the Cassandra.

Capt. Fitzgerald decided in favour of the watch. Over a year after this event, the Rose of Torridge arrived at Plymouth, February 28th, 1866. Upon his arrival there, Capt. Fitzgerald was notified by the German consul of that port that His Imperial Majesty, William II of Germany, had been pleased to forward to him a gold watch which was sent to Governor Sir Terence O'Brien, Newfoundland.

The Rose of Torridge was sold in Plymouth and Captain Fitzgerald and his hardy crew returned home on the Allan Line steamship Assyrian, arriving on April 15th. Upon his arrival, Capt. Fitzgerald was notified by Sir Terence O'Brien to appear at Government House to receive the watch.

The Old Ships And Their Captains

HR. GRACE—Last week, we recorded an account of the heroic rescue of the Captain and crew of a German steamship by Capt. Fitzgerald and his crew of the Rose of Torridge, and for which he received a well deserved award from the German government.

This was not the only heroic feat of Capt. Fitzgerald, for on September 21st, 1891, when he was in command of the schooner Arctic, owned by John Munn & Co. of Hr. Grace, he and his crew were instrumental in saving the lives of the chief officer and seven of the crew of the 1154 steamship Wolverston bound from Bristol to Philadelphia.

The Arctic had been passed by the Wolverston twenty-four hours previously, but a heavy gale and high seas had caused the foundering of the steamer a few hours later. The Captain and eight of the crew had been drowned, but the chief officer and seven men had succeeded in launching a lifeboat.

When Capt. Fitzgerald had sighted the lifeboat, he had his ship "hove to" and let her drift leeward to the side of the distressed boat. Two of the crew, with ropes around their waists jumped into the lifeboat and placed ropes around the bodies of the shipwrecked men. Then they were hauled carefully over the side of the Arctic. The two men who did this were John Oates and John Mearthy. The shipwrecked men were in a deplorable condition as their lifeboat had overturned and then righted itself, but they had lost the provisions which they had aboard their boat.

They were well looked after by the Captain and crew of the Arctic and reached Harbour Grace on October 8th, where they were passed over to the proper authorities who had them sent back to their homes in England.

Strange to say Capt. Fitzgerald never received any recognition from either the British government nor the owners of the ship for the brave rescue of eight men from the stormy waters of the broad Atlantic.

The John McCarthy referred to was a brother-in-law of Capt. Fitzgerald and he had saved the life of a Spanish girl who fell over the wharf at Cadiz in 1901. McCarthy, though encumbered by heavy seaboots and clothing, had jumped over the quay and secured the girl and swam with her to a landing place to the amazement of the spectators.

For this heroic deed, the Spanish government presented McCarthy with an address emblazoned with the Royal Arms of Spain and fifty pesetas in money. The Royal Humane Society of England presented him with a testimonial on parchment and the Newfoundland Government with a silver watch which he received from the hands of the Chief Justice Joseph Little, at that time Administrator of the Government of Newfoundland.

Story Of The Old Ships

THE GREAT GALE OF 1885

HARBOUR GRACE — The story of the great gale of 1885 was written some years ago for the Harbour Grace Standard by (we believe) the late Mr. R. S. Munn. From it, we get our article for this week.

The writer asks us to picture the rocky ironbound coast of 500 miles, which at that time had no telegraph communication, and had no contact with the outside except when the mail steamer made its fortnightly visits, weather permitting.

The people on this Labrador coast were all from Newfoundland and who went there in June and returned in October after they had shipped their season's catch by fish carriers to English and Mediterranean ports.

A part of the story of the terrific gale which had such tragic results is told in the log book of Capt. Pumphrey of Harbour Grace. It reads thus:

October 10th. (Saturday)—Fine; put "Sophia" to sea. All on board the "Rival" and ready for home.

October 11th. (Sunday)—Every appearance of a storm; called all hands to secure "Rival", 11 a.m., Storm parted stern chain, secured this immediately; 1 p.m., Wind increasing, with heavy seas making. Store blown down, landed eight bags of bread, continually putting out lines; 5 p.m., Put men on board to reserve lines, and about to take more precautions when a signal from shore advised us to leave the ship at once. All landed safely, but with great risk to life; 8 p.m., Heavy squall swept schooner from her moorings and we saw her no more. Same wave carried away erections that had stood for more than fifteen years. Spray going clean over the island.

October 12th. (Monday)—A hurricane, blinding snow and tremendous seas. Spray going over the island, coming into the houses. No fresh water to be had on the island and very little food. Night clear and frosty. Wind and sea abating.

October 13th. (Tuesday)—Getting better.

October 14th. (Wednesday)—Saw a topsail schooner in the distance. Launched a boat and intercepted her. She proved to be the English schooner "Forward", Capt. Coombs. She was bound to sea, but being made aware of our plight at once bore up and took us on board—112 in all—and brought us to St. John's where we boarded the train for our homes at Harbour Grace.

This finishes the extract from Capt. Pumphrey's log. The story goes on to tell of the plight of other schooners and their crews. At White Bear Islands, the schooner "Release" was lying with 60 people on board. Her captain, Hayden, had all fishing boats hauled up and everyone was in good spirits in the hope of leaving for home that day. The Release, with three anchors down, rode out the storm during the early part of the day but towards evening, spars were cut away and got safely clear of the ship's side, but there was no lull in the tempest, and straining very heavily, she began to leak. The women and children in the hold of the vessel could see the water gradually rising, but there was no help, it being madness to land. Before morning the chains parted and the cliff. A survivor who had his

History

MORE EPISODES OF THE 1885 GALE

At Smokey, the barquentine "Nellie" was ready for sea with 5000 quintals of codfish for Lisbon. On the demand of these shipwrecked people the captain at once abandoned his voyage, took all on board, and with an additional 200 proceeded to St. John's, thence they came to Harbour Grace by train. The scenes at the railway station on their arrival were heart rending.

Emily and Brig Harbours were more sheltered, but the storm took its toll of property and floating craft. Here Lady Elbank, 210 tons register of London, was lying ready for market. Capt. Lee at once threw his orders overboard, cleared his ship out and placing her at the disposal of the shipwrecked took on board 400 souls, whom he landed safely at Harbour Grace. In a testimonial, which once was held by the late Mr. Munn, the survivors stated that it was this action of Capt. Lee which saved their lives as they had no food.

In Indian Tickle, an exposed place, the Brig Anastasia stood on her anchor. She belonged to Bay Roberts. All other ships were swept out but no lives were lost.

Grady, one of the largest mercantile centres on the coast felt its full force. The Bridgewater schooner, Lilly, Capt. Arnold, was fish laden for Gibraltar and had put out to sea the day previous. She was never heard of. The Runcorn schooner, A. M. Brunnett, Capt. Hlay, the Brixham schooner, Capt. Huxham, as well as several smaller schooners were lost on the Black Island. Twenty people lost their lives in trying to reach the shore from the schooner, Exce, Morgan, master.

Mr. R. D. McEae had his hands full. He was the manager at Grady. His wharves and stores were swept away and all being ready for home the supply of provisions were at their lowest ebb. Refugees came from all quarters and about 1000 people congregated on this island (Grady) for him to provide for and allowance had to be resorted to.

Fortunately the S.S. Vanguard which had been sent down to bring his crews home arrived on the 20th and all were put aboard her. The Vanguard had the most valuable freight of her life, and it was with feelings of extreme relief and thankfulness to Mr. McEae and Capt. C. Delaney when she steamed alongside Munn & Co's. wharf at Harbour Grace on the last day of October. It is said that 65 people accommodated themselves in her small cabin.

Hr. Grace History

MORE OF THE 1885 GALE (Continued)

HARBOUR GRACE — At Domino, five schooners were lost including the English schooner "Village Belle" Capt. Martin in the "Sarah C." Capt. Percy, all perished except one.

At Batteau, the toll was nine schooners. Here it was that Capt. Bates of the little fish carrier "Elizabeth Lea" showed his resourcefulness.

One vessel after another was driven out, most of all bringing up on the Quero Ismand; at the mouth of the harbour; and finally the "Fanny Gray" started to go. She had about sixty people on board and an eyewitness has told that it was an awful sight to see her go helplessly drifting to her doom. She sheered clear of the "Elizabeth Lea". Capt. Bates at once threw some lines aboard, which when secured, checked her, but the McLea then started to drag. Capt. Bates without a moment's hesitation, cut his two masts off and then ordered the master of the "Fanny Gray" to do the same. This was immediately done and all were saved.

Punch Bowl. A veritable pond of a harbour and here lay the Clutha, a barquentine of Harbour Grace. She was light and it is said that her yards used to take the water at each roll. Herring barrels would fly like feathers from one side of the harbour to the other and large boats were seen to turn somersault. One eye witness told of it in his own words: "I was down in Punch Bowl last Saturday, shipping the last of my fish and was going home in the "Belle". Charlie Crocker, when the master of the "Mary M." said to me, "Tom, I am short-handed and going on Monday, come with me, you'll have a better passage" I consented. It was three weeks after this that I got clear of Punch Bowl and instead of being short handed we had 200 people on board this little 80 ton schooner."

For many years all history on the Labrador coast dated from the 1885 gale. The Lady Glover, Hercules and Plover arrived on the scene, but were astonished to find that the greater part of their work had been done by the masters of the little fish carriers who had jeopardized their fish charters without any hope of reward to relieve humanity.

vessel was driven on to the wife and two children with him, told that the vessel just bumped three times and then broke up as quickly as a barrel falls when you chop off the hoops. Forty-five out of the eighty souls went down including the family of the survivor (Bill King).

Next week we shall conclude with the story of other tragic events of that memorable gale of October, 1885.