

Irwin Family ca 1890-1960

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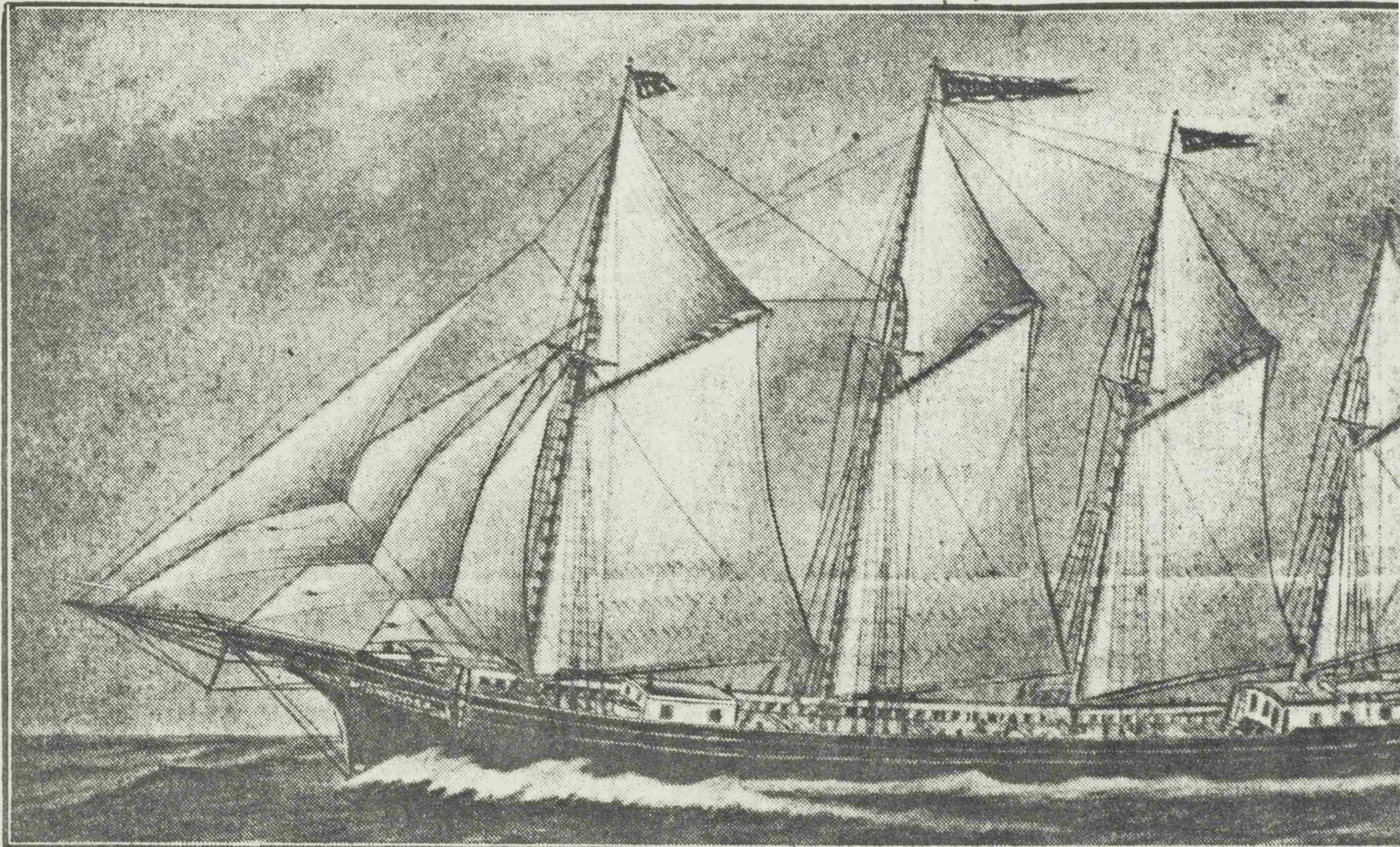
READING ROOM

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OUTSAILED STEAMERS— —BUT LAKE CAUGHT

By C. H. J. SNIDER

Seventy-five thousand bushels was too much for Minnedosa with reduced freeboard, and her made the record he hoped.



THE MINNEDOSA IN HER PRIDE OF SAIL
MINNEDOSA, Kingston-built pride of Canada on the Great Lakes, with her four masts, twelve sails, and figurehead that cost \$1,000

MINNEDOSA was meant to sail, and did sail, as fast as any steamboat could go. Her first voyage to Toledo to load grain was in tow of the tug Walker, because they knew she would need a tug to get her through the Welland canal and up the Maumee river. The Walker couldn't keep the towline taut when they made sail on her, and cast off. When they got to the canal there was little use for the tug, either, for the Minnedosa was so long she filled the new (then) locks completely, and the tug had to lock through ahead of her or after her. The tug came in handy of course on the long level, and in light winds, especially if they were ahead.

The Minnedosa had to tow through the canal with horses, and it took four teams to move her—six or eight if the wind got strong. That was one of her drawbacks. And twelve men are said to have been needed to sail her—whether twelve all told, or twelve in the forecabin

and four in the cabin is not known. That is one of the reasons why she was cut down to be a tow barge. She needed a smaller crew. There were only eight in her when she was a barge.

MASTERS OF MINNEDOSA

The Minnedosa's first master was Capt. John Geoghan of Kingston; her last, Capt. Phillips. Capt. Geoghan was succeeded by Capt. John Irwin, of Kingston, who had successful seasons in her in 1896 and 1897 but had to give her up from a fatal illness contracted on board. Her freights from Fort William to Kingston ran sometimes as high as \$3,000 a trip. In the plain living and high thinking 1890's, with sailors wages at \$1 a day and "corporation pay" considered extravagant at 15 cents an hour, any vessel earning a \$1,000 freight was a money maker.

Capt. "Cham" Irwin — Robert Chamberlain was his first names—succeeded his father, John, in 1897 and sailed the Minnedosa until 1904, when he left her and went into steam,

in the English built 'midship bridged steamer Wexford, lost in the Great Gale of 1913. Capt. Irwin was not in her. He died in Collingwood in 1909 after laying the Wexford up. Two of his sons live in Toronto, Dr. R. N. Irwin and Mr. Wm. Geo. Irwin.

Capt. John Irwin's name lived long after him on the lakes in the tanker John Irwin (now the Cyclowarrior) of the BA Oil Co. She was built in the old country.

Before becoming master of the Minnedosa Capt. Irwin had been master of the schooner Edward Blake for seven years when she was owned by Samuel Fraser. Her portrait appeared recently in *Schooner Days*. She had a curious adventure with McGarrigle of Chicago.

Capt. John Irwin was an old employe of the Cabin Company, timber-merchants, of Garden Island, and of James Morton, of the Kingston distillery. Later he sailed his own schooners, the Lily, lost off Long Point in a storm—his only disaster—and the Champion and Queen of

the Bay. He was in partnership for a time with James Falcomer. He was 47 years a lake mariner.

MORE THAN BUILDER'S HEART WAS BROKEN

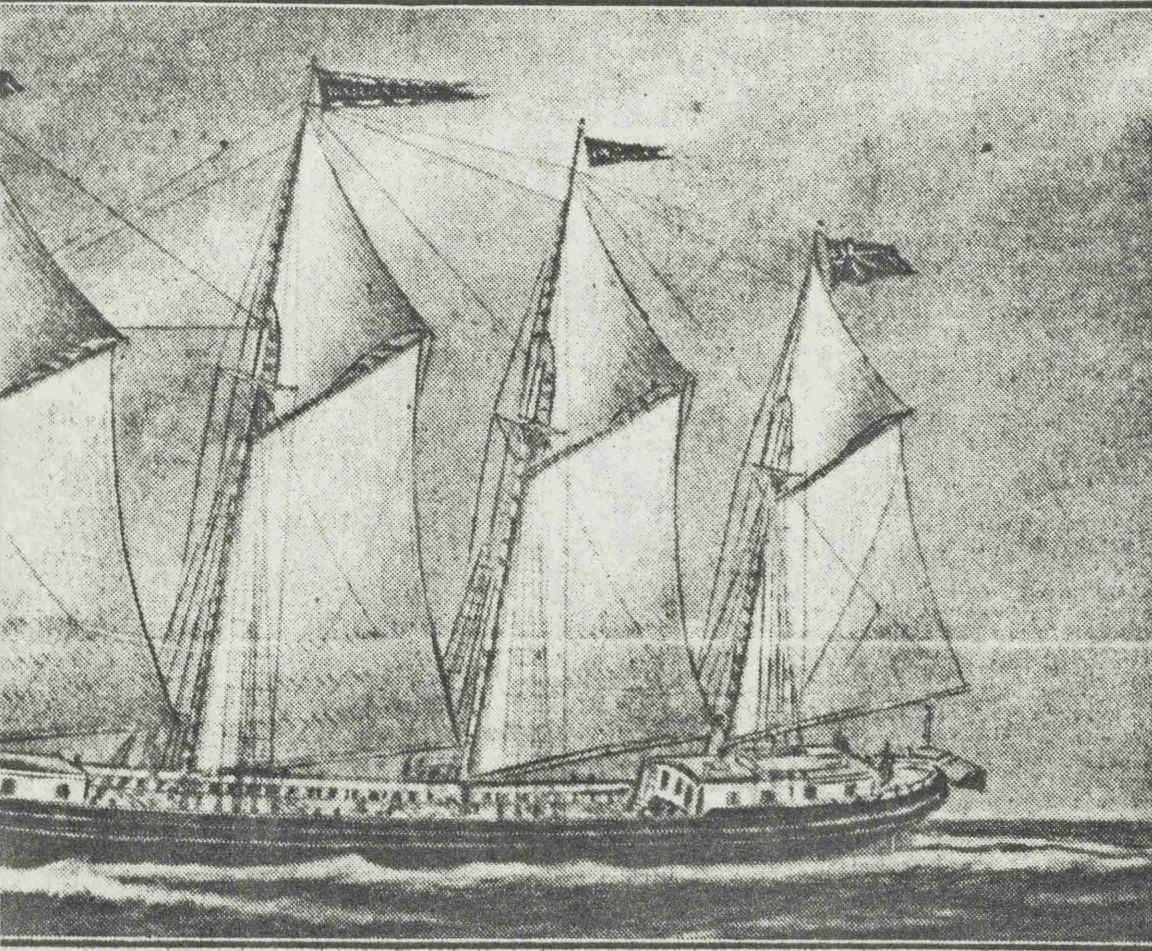
One error in judgment was made in building the Minnedosa and it cost dear in the end. It almost broke the builder's heart, although he was in no way to blame for it. The management was persuaded that the ship would have too much freeboard, that is, she was going to have her side unnecessarily high out of the water so that with her hold full to the hatches she would draw so much water she could not get through the canal. So they gave the order when she was in frame to finish her with 18 inches less topsides than planned. As originally designed she could have carried 90,000 bushels and been the most seaworthy vessel on fresh water.

She seemed to do well enough, as it was but the testing time came when she was fifteen years old and crowded with cargo in an effort to

STEAMERS— LAKE CAUGHT HER

Schooner Days
DCXCVIII

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She seemed to do well enough, as it was but the testing time came when she was fifteen years old and crowded with cargo in an effort to

establish a new record for a big load from Fort William to Kingston. With 75,000 bushels in her she had not enough reserve buoyancy and spare freeboard to rise with the waves like a duck or a gull; instead she tipped like a helldiver. This befell her in an autumn gale on Oct. 20th, 1905, 2½ miles off Harbor Beach in Lake Huron, across the lake from Goderich.

She was in tow then of the steamer Westmount, behind the barge Melrose, for the tall topmasts had long been taken out of her and her masts reduced to stumps. She had become a towbarge, just another of the weary caravan trailing up and down the lakes behind tug or steamer. Running for shelter in a great gale she went down in a sea and never came up, and she took good men with her, six sailors and Capt. Phillips and his wife. Seeing that she was foundering, Capt. Phillips is believed to have cut the towline so as to save the Melrose ahead of him from foundering too.

RAILWAYS SHY 500 PULLMANS FOR CIVILIANS

Diners Also Turned Over to Returned Men — Servicemen Never Travelled So Comfortably

Montreal, June 23 — Transport Controller Lockwood and Canada's two major railroads weren't fooling when they said returning service personnel were going to get top priority on the best railway equipment in the country. They weren't fooling, either, when they said that this priority for servicemen was going to put a serious crimp in civilian travelling comfort.

The figures on the whereabouts of the sleeping and dining car equipment of the Canadian railways tell the story. Before the servicemen started coming home in large numbers there were some 800 sleeping cars on regular runs throughout Canada—now there are 300. And if the military requirements should become larger, that 300 will shrink accordingly. The proportion is similar for dining car equipment.

There is no parallel in Canadian railroading history for the switch of almost two-thirds of the country's sleeping and dining equipment to the troop specials. There is not even a remote precedent for the wholesale "raiding" of regular trains to provide the best equipment.

And, as far as railway officials are concerned, there is no parallel for the utter lack of complaints from the civilian travellers who are riding the day coaches and carrying their lunches so that the returning veterans can ride and eat in comfort.

There is no precedent from the standpoint of the service men either, for that matter. They didn't go away in such style. When they left they rode in whatever was available, on trains whose movements were masked in secrecy. If they were lucky, they had sleepers and diners. More often they travelled by coach and got their food at their seats from fatigue parties who collected it in makeshift commissary cars.

And now? As one veteran put it when a 16-car sleeper special pulled into Montreal: "The only trouble was we had to wait while they changed the tablecloths in the diners between each sitting."

CHURCH FREE OF ALL DEBT CONSECRATED

Traditional Rite Performed at St. Chad's—Farewell To Departing Rector — New Rector Welcomed

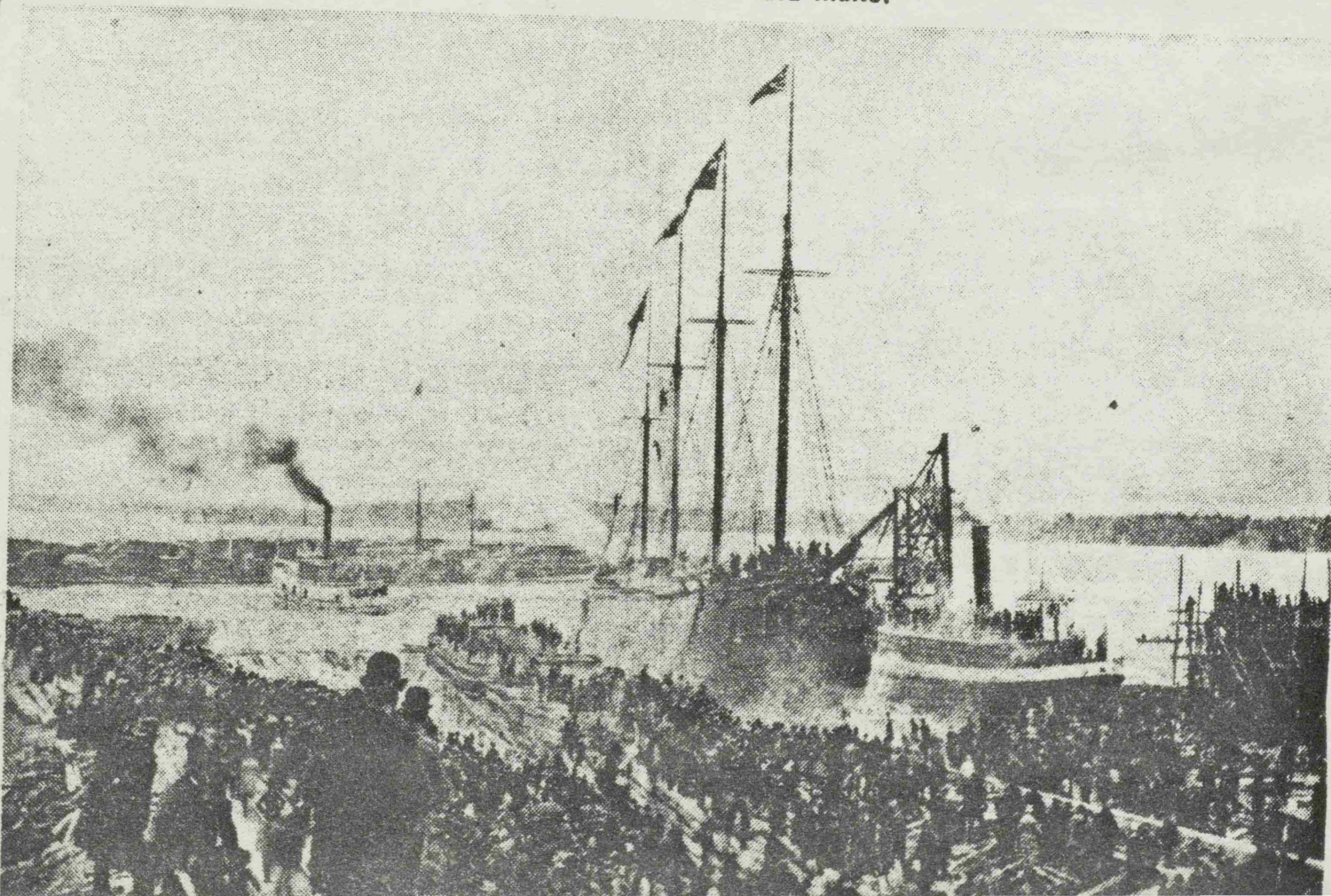
High tribute to St. Chad's Anglican Church, Dufferin street, was paid by Very Rev. C. E. Riley, D.D., dean of Toronto and rector of St. Chad's

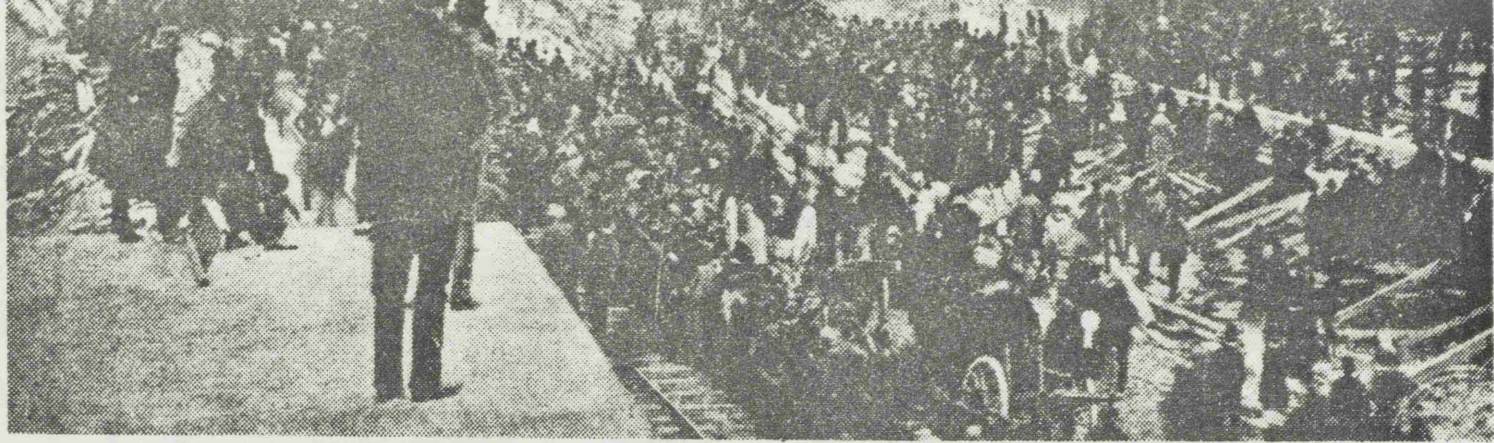
THE EVENING TELEGRAM, TORONTO, SATURDAY, JUNE 9, 1945

FASTWATER, 4-POSTER, *Schooner Days* DCXCVI WAS CANADA'S PRIDE

By C. H. J. SNIDER

Her christened name was Minnedosa, meaning "Water of the Rapids"—She was the best oak and iron could make.





LAUNCH OF THE MINNEDOSA AT KINGSTON, APRIL 26th, 1890

—From an early photogravure in the Dominion Illustrated.

PRIDE OF CANADA was the registered name of a lake barquentine built by Louis Shickluna at St. Catharines in 1859. She was a good vessel of her class, the Old Welland Canal type, limited by the locks to 138 feet length and 365 tons register, the most that could be dragged over the sills.

The real pride of Canada in the lake trade came thirty years later, when James Roney, master builder for the Montreal Transportation Co., laid the keel blocks for the schooner Minnedosa in the company's shipyard at Kingston east of the old Tetu du Pont barracks, where the brick stables now stand. Work was begun in 1889, and on April 26th, 1890, she was ready for launching.

All the soft soap in Frontenac County had been gathered up to grease the ways. Two tugs were required to start her. The launching bottle was broken and the christened name pronounced — "Minnedosa." Minnedosa is a Sioux word meaning waters of the rapids. "Fastwater" would be an English equivalent.

ILL OMEN AT LAUNCH

Down the ways slid the great hollow-sounding hull, until the bow was almost clear. Then she hung. Her great weight had spread or broken the huge oaken timbers of the slideways under water.

A diver had to go down to ascertain what was holding her. It was a perilous task to remove the obstructions without injuring the vessel or being crushed by her. Scholars

thought of the origin of the launching custom of shedding the blood of the grape on the bow, which is said to represent the blood of the human sacrifices with which pagan launchings were accompanied of yore. Sailors said if she killed a man at her launching she would go on killing men all her life.

But she was floated off without injury to herself or the diver, and had a useful career of twenty-five years. Yet the life-price of her christening was paid in the end.

LAST AND GREATEST SCHOONER

The Minnedosa really justified the name "Pride of Canada," although she never wore it. She was the last and the greatest of the thousand schooners built in Canada for the lakes. Her builders lavished labor and decoration upon her. She was as good a vessel as could be built from oak and iron in the 19th century. She was 250 feet long from stem to stern, 242 feet on the keel, 38 feet beam, 17 feet deep in the hold.

These figures from Dominion Illustrated, May 10th, 1890. I have not her registered tonnage. The Great Lakes Red Book credited her with 2,000 tons capacity as an ore carrier.

Her floor-frames, the heaviest part of her ribbing, were oak timbers 18 inches by 16 inches, as heavy as those of the famous Kingston-built three-decker H.M.S. St. Lawrence, of 102 guns, and there was only five inches of space between them.

Her bilge planks were great lengths of oak eight inches thick. Her sides

and ceiling were 5-inch oak plank. All this oak was reinforced by a steel sheerstrake $\frac{5}{8}$ of an inch thick belting her all around at the deck level and 18 inches deep. Below this, inside, she had diagonal straps of steel forming three 5-foot squares and landing $2\frac{1}{2}$ feet on the floor frames. This was to prevent hogging.

OUR FIRST FOUR MASTER

She had four masts, and the mainmast was 150 feet from heel to topmast truck. She was not a lofty vessel, for her proportions of beam to length, one to seven, and the impracticability of carrying ballast, called for a comparatively low-sail plan. But she had four topmasts, and was fully rigged on all masts carrying twelve working sails. With the wind abeam she was capable of making fifteen knots.

She had six cargo hatches. Her forecabin was a high, square deck-house, under the foreboom. Nearly all other lake schooners had their forecabin forward, in the eyes of the ship, and below deck. She had a handsome poop-cabin aft, where her deck was raised. The cabin had two doors and two windows in the forward bulkhead, four windows on each side and a large skylight over the dining room, which was in the after part of it. The jiggermast came through the cabin roof, forward of the skylight.

FIGUREHEAD A MASTERPIECE

The stern was rounded with a beautiful elliptical transom and her stem had a graceful cutwater knee and trailboards, culminating in a lifesize half-length figure of Ceres,

the Grecian goddess of harvest. Behind her inverted cornucopias, or horns of plenty, poured out the bounty of corn and wheat and the fruits of the earth, flowing back in a beautifully carved Greek scroll running along the cheek-knees. On the headrails which braced the figurehead was, at each end, a Canadian beaver with a maple branch in his mouth. Between the lines of the rails the name was carved deep. A thousand dollars was spent on goldleaf and painting for this figurehead. It was the finest ever set afloat on fresh water. It was designed and its construction supervised by N. Henderson, Kingston artist. The gilding, all in gold leaf, was done by John Martin. The artist who did the carving was Louis Gourdjier, one of the most skilful wood workers in Canada. He even finished the catheads, the great foot-square oak timbers projecting from the bows for cutting the anchors, with the heads of cats as large as tigers, carved in relief on the ends of the timbers, and these were painted to look like life.

It took 65-ft. oak sticks, 14 inches square, to build up her main keelson, and her sister keelsons were also 14 inches square. She had two decks and two shelf-pieces 36 x 7 inches on each side, with doubled deck-frames supported by 140 iron hanging knees, each weighing 400 lbs. She cost between \$60,000 and \$70,000 to build in 1890. It is doubtful if the work could be done now at ten times the figure, if it could be done at all. We have neither the oak nor the carpenters.

I asked a friend who had come from Ireland (Kella Meanie) if they were near Charlemont, oh! he said that is where the gentry live, well Charlemont-Armagh-Ireland is where my father (no. Irvins was born, of an Irish-mother & Scottish father.

Father's mother (Martha Gillespie) sometimes spelled Cuthpuy - died 3 days after my father's birth, his grand parents Gillespie took charge of him & when they came to Canada 1840 my father came also, he was then about 6 yrs. old. He received his education which was excellent according to that time; his father (John Irvins was the youngest son of a Scottish titled family he came to Canada later & settled in Toronto, he was a civil engineer where he followed his profession, investigating a fire in a drug firm, his feet & legs became poisoned, which eventually killed him, he is buried in one of the old, old cemeteries in Toronto, Grandfather Irvins was the owner of Modrick Salt Wells quite a strip of land Toronto water front & a very nice home near Castle Frank Road, Toronto Mother was very fond of him & visited him often while he was in the hospital, found him a well educated gentleman, father I am sorry to say through misrepresentation felt his father had deserted him, altho his father had more than adequately provided for him financially, when Grandfather had left

His worldly goods to my father, he wouldn't
work after them & lost the property thro. taxes
The Salt Wells notes no. & Will tried to regain
possession, but they were so long neglected, could
not get any satisfaction so they were lost also.
Father died at the age of 60, his epitaph
speaks for itself.

Mother's family originally came from the
New England States.

Grandmother Davis was twice married, she
was born in Rutland Vermont 1797 died
1883 - her maiden name was Olivia Ann Taft
of the famous Taft family U.S.A. her first
husband's name was Spoor from near Salem
Mass. 3 children from this union, Aunt Sarah
Ann, Selina & Uncle Nora Spoor, after she became
a widow married Geo. Davis of Penn. ^{Dutch}
descent, six children of this union of which
my mother (Eliya Ann) was the youngest, ~~and~~
3 or 4 of them were born on Wolfe Island.

When U. S. declared their independence, my
grand-parents came to Canada via St Lawrence
River in small boats & had to portage their
belongings over the Long Sault Rapids which
has now become part of St Lawrence Seaway.
They settled in Kingston Ont. where grand-
father Davis was given a grant of land, which
is now Custom House & former Post office, as it was
more or less bush, grandfather sold it for a
demi John of Rum, according to reports was

71 About the medicine they had at that time,
some medicine? they eventually crossed to
Wolfe Island or Long Island as it is sometimes
called, as it is the longest island in the St.
Lawrence they were among the 1st settlers there
& where Uncle Mow Spoor, became the dispenser of
law & order, as the island was practically virgin
there was much to be done.

Grandmother Davis became very efficient, looking
after the sick & never refused to go to their assistance
regardless of weather or discomfort to herself. She
was a very brilliant woman.

Her family by Davis on the island were —
Richard, Mrs, Carolyn, Wortha, Willard, Eliza Ann.
Many of mother's relatives came later to the
Island & settled there, her family leaned more
to commerce & the arts than farming, numbers
among them — James K. Hackett a Shakespearean
actor of note born on the island, in fact there
is a plaque to his memory in the Little Church
around the Green New York City, another cousin
dancing celebrity died in Chicago, Hastings of
U.S. & Rochester — a noted lawyer & military.
When the lawyer visited us he looked so very
much like mother he was always taken for
her brother.

Uncle Mora Shoor - name some distinguished
man, married a French N.C. woman raised
a very brilliant family among them 5 girls
were artists & musicians. Uncle Mora always
remained a staunch Anglican was known from
Coast to Coast as an outstanding layman
(Archdeacon Boquet told me that didn't know
I was related to him, in his words a most
remarkable man.)

Aunt Selina a widow when she came to the
island

Aunt Sarah Ann, married James Eccles a builder
& was one of the 1st builders of docks around
Kington & Penitentiary docks.

Among Uncle Mora's grand children (Staley) in
one family there were 3 Nuns & 4 priests, Nuns all
taught music, piano & violin, painting & languages
were attached to Lorette Abbey - Toronto Ont, 2 Nuns
& 4 priests died, I quote this as I think it
most unusual, I attended 3 of their funerals)

One son of Uncle Mora represented the island
in parliament. The family were all well
educated, girls attending B. School & had all the
culture pertaining to young ladies at that time.
It was a real pleasure to hear Uncle Mora talk
with his New Eng. accent & so precise, he wore
small gold hoop ear-rings which always
fascinated me. I did not know my 2 aunts as
they had passed away before I arrived, but my
oldest sisters & brothers often talked about them &

✓ the lovely way they talked & language they used, mother & 3 brothers went out west & the line trading in rail-road ties & lumber, one for Gov. Marine Light-House Keeper.

Aunt Carolyn was grand loved by everyone for her kindness & hospitality, had written poetry & jingles galore & one novel never published married Anthony La Kush.

Aunt Dolly as we called her was a beautiful dignified woman she too had the New England accents we all loved her & always looked forward to both Aunt Carolyn & Aunt Dolly's visits Aunt Dolly married a Parisian French man Jos. Yatt raised a lovely family of six very musical especially singing & piano, all very artistic.

Elija Ann Davis was the youngest of the family married a child hood sweet heart.

John Irwin in 1860 Feb. 14th. Kingston Ont.
Ten children of this union:

John Willard married May Ramsay of Fort William Will was as well known in his field as brother Jos. in his. He had a beautiful speaking voice in fact was called the silver voiced orator of the west, when he passed away his funeral was attended with colleagues from coast to coast. He was quite an inventor, two of which I recall distinctly, a grain dryer which was patented & used also a lock or handle for freight-cars patented & used. He was an absolute teetotaler a staunch Anglican, political Conservative

VI

Musica piccolo - 8 children - 3 living.

Olivia Ann - a pretty, gentle, refined girl excellent pianist also inventor to her credit, a screen door which is patented in Ottawa & sold to a Sash & Door Factory, married Samuel John Kelly Irish descent, one of the many heirs of the famous Baker Estate, he kept his family poor paying lawyers etc. he was a painter & decorator especially imitating different woods, The Parliament Bldg. Ottawa, Churches & Banks have some of his finest work, a great labor man, fast talker always called father governor, which father hated. politics Conservative, - Catholic Apostolic.

~~6~~ 6 children - 3 living - Irwin killed in action 1st. world war. Incidentally Baker Estate is still alive, I met 2 ladies recently (elderly) who are still paying lawyers & expecting a settlement (what a myth)? Theodore was our happy, gay, handsome brother married a very pretty girl Sarah Roddy.

Horses & Yachts his hobbies, a fine musician piano, accordion & voice, kept a tailor shop catering to military trade, very popular with all classes of people - 2 children / living. Conservative - Anglican.

VII

Robert Chamberlain - a grand, kind gentleman
loved + respected by everyone who knew him.
followed in his father's footsteps Master Mariner.
married his boy hood sweet heart beautiful
Mary Elliott - six children, 5 living.
Non drinker + poor smoker - politics Cons. -
Anglican, Music - Banjo or guitar also excellent
voice. Theodore + Chame were always called
the Irwin twins, altho there was nearly 3 yrs.
between them, they were inseparable, Theodore
was our 1st break in family of grown ups.
Martha - lovely, happy, fun loving girl.
wonderful house keeper, very good pianist.
married a German American in U.S. since babyhood
fine provider + home lover worked for Socony
oil Co. - Democrat - Lutheran, Martha became
an American citizen.

Rodney - a lovable bachelor, sometimes went
over the top but always a gentleman, lived
most of his life in U.S. an expert with banjo
& travelled through states with orchestra,
eventually following his 1st love sailing Great
Lakes from Duluth to Galveston Texas.
politics Democrat - Anglican became an
American citizen.

Lorraine + Walter died early in life
small children 4 - 6 -

VII
I am the last living member of family
growing along in love & sorrow of family and
relatives with grand memories of my sisters
and brothers the love & kindness lavished on
me: Music piano - politics Conservative - Anglican.
Married Joseph Arthur Wallace - (Heating Engineer)
of Irish descent - member of well known Wallace
family, newspapers, owners, editors etc, Claire Wallace
world traveller & commentator. The Wallaces claim
they are direct descendants of Sir Wm. Wallace.
John - a grand son, brother, husband & father
loved & respected, married Irene Cooper a beautiful girl.
John was successful in anything he attempted.
He organized & was 1st. president of the well
known McCall - Frontenac Oil Co. also owner of
McArthur - Irwin paint & dye Co. & several other
Companies: politics Conservative & I believe he
became a Presbyterian after his marriage,
previously Anglican - Two children living.
My brothers all had an eye for feminine beauty.
Grandfather Davis - 30 yrs. blind through
an accident lived the last yrs in our home
lived to near 100.
Grandmother Davis spent last years of her
life with us lived to 86, also mother's youngest
brother Uncle Will lived with us he was 86
All are buried in Trinity Cemetery, Wolfe Island
with Uncle Nora Spoor.

IX Mother Will

Sister Olivia

Theodore

Ernest

Martha

Rodney

all born on Wolfe Island

Lorraine, Walter

Lennie & John

Born in
Kingston Ont.

Father was most indulgent, never known to punish any of his children physically or otherwise. Mother had all the discipline to do just too bad any of us caught ^{lying} or any other dishonesty, her motto, honesty, kindness, truthfulness and obedience, as we were all more or less different temperaments we were bound to have differences, but all in all we were a closely knit family, we were all very fond of mother, she managed home, money & children quite capably & in her late fifties became quite proficient in music (piano). When mother was over 80 was called to Chicago as a witness for an identification case involving 1/2 million dollars, her evidence, I believe was the ^{stone} that swung the case. The Kingston & Wolfe Island witnesses were away over 2 weeks, mother had a nurse mother had & sister Olivia in her party.

Mother was very proud of her family and ambitious for them, but I am sure we caused her many disappointments & heart aches too. Many times we were told a lady or gentleman is born not made & we were supposed to act accordingly.

X To the best of my knowledge this is an unbiased truthful statement without exaggeration, as our home was the meeting place for mother's relatives, they all seemed to love Aunt Ann & Uncle Jack in fact they were the wailing wall for all the relatives & problems. I naturally picked up a great deal of information as I was refreshment dispenser. I only wish I could remember more of the early life & hardships → grandmother protesting deserters etc.

Grandfather's home grew from a log cabin to a big comfortable home & now I believe is a summer hotel enlarged of course. Yes we are direct descendants of U.E.-loyalists. Irwins do not have to take a back seat with anyone as far as back ground is concerned. We have a fine heritage to live up to and to my knowledge there has never been any criminals, thieves or pirates connected with either my father's or mother's family.

It has been fun living with & in a big family, now I am left it is at times very lonely.

Annie Irwin Wallace. - June 22 - 61

over

Davis Dry Dock of Kingston now
Gov. Dry Dock -

Moore's Elevator Co.

Davis tannery & Leather are all
members of my mother's family -

The Gillespie Family of Kingston
and Wolfe Island - my grand mother Irwin
relatives are a well known and
highly respected family

Bishop Irwin of Scotland some time ago
claimed relationship & corresponded with
brother Jno. but Jno. neglected correspondence
& lost address.

When I was in Boston last summer 1960
the Taft family were having a reunion
near Boston & many of the names listed
in paper, I had heard mother mention
many times.

A. J. W.