

# QUINTE IDYL OF A HUNDRED YEARS

(By C. H. J. Snider in "Schooner Days," Toronto Evening Telegram)

Durward Cole came to the family ferry on Long Reach when it was more like the Queen Elizabeth highway than a silent side street of Lake Ontario. The family moved into the great big store John Bedford had built for the upsurge of prosperity following the development of Upper Canada. Dennis Daly had kept it and it thrived mightily, for it was strategically placed at the ferry, with the High Shore road behind it and so many schooners building and loading at Roblin's Mills in the cove below.

Cole's ferry landing was much more than just one end of a crossing. Half a dozen steamers called there regularly—the Ella Ross twice a day, the Aletha, Hero, Varuna, Reindeer, Deseronto, Alexandria every day, on excursions or for passengers. Not all of these came daily, but there was as good a passenger service on the Bay of Quinte eighty years ago as there is in Toronto Bay now. Perhaps better. The Ella Ross, for example, plying the ten-mile lane between Deseronto and Picton, made four stops after leaving Cole's Ferry — at Huff's Wharf across the Reach, at Bogart's Wharf below, for Hay Bay, at Roblin's Cove, at Thompson's Wharf on the other side, occasionally at Hallowell Mills or Glenora, and then into Picton.

These stops give an idea of the extent of traffic on the Bay then. It was a thronged highway for steam and sail. The bulk freighting was done by the sloops and schooners. Durward Cole recalls twenty-eight schooners under sail at one time in the ten-mile Long Reach; a glad sight with their fluttering pinions of new blue-white linen or yellow cotton duck, or all the shades to which wind and weather, grainedust, coal and iron ore bleach or blacken canvas. The sails would be crowned by long colored masthead flies like whiplashes, above hulls black and white, green, red, leadcolor or yellow or all these in combination, with contrasting stripes and gay hawespipes, figureheads and quarterboards with the vessels names enrolled.

Farmers drove in with their butter, (15 cents a pound, top price retail), eggs (10 cents a dozen if good big ones), cheese, apples, peas, oats, and barley to trade for dry goods, hardware, groceries, coal oil and all the growing luxuries of life brought from Kingston or Oswego. Sloops and schooners of from 30 to 300 tons burden brought them in, and too kaway the farm products; principally to the Richardson grain elevators and the market square at Kingston or the Oswego breweries. Though some went to England and South America. At any rate the schooner Pacific, built at Roblin's, did. She carried bones and rough lumber to England and nitrates from South America to Boston, and was lost on the coast of Newfoundland coming home with a cargo of coal.

The store was a substantial structure, stonewalled below, timbered above. It stands solidly yet at the water's edge, after 104 years, although the wharfage which once surrounded it has gone. What memories it must have; of crinolines and Grecian bends, of Crimean War prices and Rectiprocity; good times and hard work; of hard times and no work; of prosperity coming back and motor horns replacing steamboat whistles, and steel trucks, the broad-beamed sloops and schooners of local oak and pine!

In the stone part of it the exports were stored and the imports were received, to be retailed over the fine cherrywood counters in the storey above. Remaining arches and joiner work show that the store must have been an attractive one, with its shelves and drawers laden with prints, cottons and woolens, hats, caps, boots and shoes, parasols, paper collars, macassar oil, crockery, china, tinware, spices, tea, coffee, cocoa, groceries, dried fruits, biscuits and sweetmeats—including conversation lozenges, cough drops, bullseyes, sugarsticks, licorice, Godley's magazine, family bibles, and Currier Ives prints.

With the growth of general stores at every four-corners the retail feature of this ferry emporium contracted, but the wholesale expanded with the big barley business, the building was devoted to the storage and shipment of grain, hay, apples and root-crops.

The Coles operated the grain warehouse for years, charging 2 cents a bushel for "weighing"—unloading and reloading and tallying—the farmers' grain. A million bushels of Prince Edward County gold went in and out through those limestone walls by bag and barrow, shovel and spout, for the ferry wharf was a shipping place up to the time of the Great War.

Some of the vessels Durward remembers his father loading were:

The graceful Acacia, when Capt. Byron Bongard sailed her.

The Baltic of Wellington Square, lost at Oswego in December, 1894.

Round-sterned Delaware, hard to steer, that had been the Dave Andrews.

Kate of Oakville, capsized three miles below the Ferry in the mouth of Hay Bay by a night squall off the High Shore, drowning two of her crew.

Also the first Ariadne, lost on Stony Point's drowned island in a snow-storm in 1886, and the second Ariadne, much smaller, a converted Cuthbert yacht which went to pieces at Port Credit in 1910; and perhaps the third Ariadne, a scow sloop built at Stella in Amherst Island about this time, one of the last of the Bay trading sloops.

Other callers included the schooner Mary of Napanee, Young Andy Baird's pride and joy, which carried him and his crew to death off Oswego 45 years ago.

The Snow Bird, formerly the Minnie Proctor, a little smaller than the Kate and the Mary and with long non-tragic history.

Probably the Flora, rebuilt from the Flying Scud, which ended at Oakville. And the Highland Beauty, when Capt. Billy Lobb took her to the Bay of Quinte from Toronto in 1900.

The white D. Freeman, built in Port Burwell, which became a black floating elevator at Kingston after fifty years afloat.

Occasionally the Oliver Mowat, one of the few three-masters to call. She was run down by a steamer off the False Ducks, Capt. T. L. Vandusen and half his crew were drowned. And the steamer captain went to jail. The little Lizzie Metzner, small but full-rigged three-master, was another.

The Lyman Davis, last of the lakers, burned at Sunnyside, 1935.

These were all lake schooners of fair size, ranging from six to sixteen thousand bushel capacity, or from 200 to 700 tons deadweight. The Mowat might carry more grain, but as a rule these vessels would be picking up only 1,000 bushels or so at the Ferry to finish out cargoes gathered here and there for Kingston, Oswego or Ogdensburg down the St. Lawrence.

Then there were the small fry of from 100 tons down to 30, or a bare 1,000 bushels, like the schooner scows Two Brothers of Picton, the Maggie L. and Laura D. of Kingston, the John Wesley that they nicknamed the Punchy, and the Madcap and the Idlewyld, and scow sloops like the Gull and the Granger and perhaps the Trent and her two sisters brought up from Quebec, although these specialized in the bunchwood trade. The others would load baled hay or grain or apples from whatever wharf had them, or even from the banks of the Bay fields, for their light draught and flat bottoms allowed them to moor to the trees. Their market was Kingston, the Richardson elevators there or the Montreal Transportation Company's barges for down the St. Lawrence.

One little sloop, perhaps it was the Madcap, came to grief within an hour of loading her thousand bushels of peas at the Ferry. Running down the Reach with a fresh breeze, she nipped the corner too close near Trumpour Point where the Adolphus Reach runs east from the Long one, and struck a rock there. It went through her and she filled with water. The peas in her hold swelled so quickly that she burst like a paper bag.



FRANK HUFF

## Century farm changes hands

The farm of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Huff, Mount Pleasant, which has been in the Huff family for three generations and well over a hundred years, has been transferred to Kent and Janie Douglas. Mr. Huff's grandfather, the late James Edward Huff was one of the pioneers to purchase registered holstein cattle about 1910. With the holstein business being continued by his son Morris Huff it was a natural for the third generation to grow up with and become a prominent holstein breeder.

For several years, after ceasing to milk cows they were engaged in the heifer business, buying young animals, keeping 50 to 70 on hand, breeding them and selling some to local breeders but the majority were sold for export to foreign countries.

By attending most of the fairs, exhibitions and cattle sales in the province they were able to keep in close touch with up to date market prices and the blood lines that were currently popular. By making contacts in this way they were instrumental in securing many buyers looking for cattle to export. Travelling with buyers to purchase they personally managed the testing, assembling and shipment of animals for them from the district.

Not being tie 114 ay  
milking they h an-  
ity to accompany ral  
shipments to foreign countries  
including Mexico, Chile, and  
Italy. They found this way of  
life more interesting than  
milking. Due to an unreliable  
source of labor and nearing  
retirement age most of the herd  
were sold at a dispersal in 1974,  
keeping a few that were over  
the basic herd set up limit  
which are maintained in other  
breeders herds on a share basis.

To diversify the farm set up,  
15 acres of orchards were  
planted consisting of cherries,  
apples, pears and plums. Being  
situated on the main highway of  
the county he operated a  
roadside market and also  
attended Belleville Farmers  
Market for 25 years where most  
of the products of fruit,  
vegetables, poultry and eggs  
were retailed.

Their three sons who assisted  
materially in the farm opera-  
tions as teenagers were eager-  
ly interested in a continued  
education.

After graduating from  
McMaster and Guelph Universi-  
ties they continued until two  
obtained their Masters Degree  
and one his PH.D.

The oldest son Morris has  
advanced to Assistant Manager  
of the Ontario Food Council,  
Queen's Park, Toronto. The  
second son George, who became  
an accomplished artist, also  
teaches Science and Physics in a  
high school in Toronto.

The youngest son Dr. Bruce  
Huff is an economist with the  
Federal Department of Agricul-  
ture in Ottawa. Mr. and Mrs.  
Huff built a new home on a five  
acre lot in view of the home  
farm in 1969. They sold the  
orchard and roadside business  
in 1973. The transaction dis-  
posing of the remainder of the  
farm has just been completed.

Now retired with reasonably  
good health, interests are six  
grandchildren, a few cattle,  
garden, flowers, community  
and church work and travel.

Having explored countries in  
four different continents and  
making five trips to Europe on  
different occasions they can do  
a lot of reminiscing about "the  
places we've been".

They are grateful to the  
many friends and business  
associates who have helped and  
patronized them over the years  
and hope they will continue to  
patronize the new farm owners,  
Mr. and Mrs. Kent Douglas, in  
their roadside operations.