

and the second cook. Ontario Provincial Police rescued the twelve survivors after being alerted by campers at a local campground near Chrysler Park Marina, who had heard the shouts of the men in the water and clinging to the ship's masts.

The survivors spoke of the suddenness of the sinking and the lack of warning. Second Engineer Marcel Gendron and Third Engineer John Scott would later testify that their only warning that the ship was sinking came when they saw water pouring into the engineroom. They claimed to owe their lives to being expelled through the engineroom skylight by the pressure of the compressed air after they had tried to escape and found the doors jammed shut by the pressure. O.P.P. divers conducted a search for the bodies of the drowned, and the first to be recovered was that of Capt. Groulx, which was found inside the pilothouse.

No Mayday radio call had come from EASTCLIFFE HALL. Informed of the original grounding, Seaway Iroquois was ignorant of subsequent events until more than an hour after the sinking, when the downbound Quebec & Ontario Transportation steamer SHELTER BAY (II) reached the position and reported that the EASTCLIFFE HALL was sunk, with only the upper sections of her spars visible above the water.

How could this have happened on a night with good visibility and the ship in the hands of a crew familiar with the river? The Court of Investigation, convened at Cornwall under Commissioner The Honourable Mr. Justice Francois Chevalier and Assessors Capt. Carl Bodensieck and Capt. Paul Morinville, in August and September of 1970, attempted to find the answers to this and other questions surrounding the tragedy.

Inspection by divers revealed that EASTCLIFFE HALL had sunk because of flooding from a large hole in her starboard bow below the waterline, sustained by striking a submerged concrete crib that had supported an abandoned channel marker. The 300-ton light base, which was not shown on navigation charts, was moved an incredible 24 feet by the impact with the ship.

How had EASTCLIFFE HALL struck the light base after grounding at Gooseneck Island, about a mile west of the hazard? The court concluded that, after freeing his ship (from Gooseneck Island), Capt. Groulx had directed her on a clockwise, circular course to the north and east of the designated channel, presumably planning to rejoin the channel somewhere near Chrysler Shoal and then to resume westbound progress. This is consistent with the testimony of Chief Mate Marchand, who gave evidence that he was directed by Capt. Groulx to steer to starboard of a red buoy he noted nearby, contravening normal westbound practice. When the ship struck the light base, she was travelling in a southeasterly direction, still outside the navigation channel.

The enquiry also revealed that the range light system then in use on this part of the St. Lawrence River was confusing at best. Westbound vessels steered on two closely-situated sets of ranges, following Weaver Shoal Ranges until just below Chrysler Shoal, and then heading on Gooseneck Island Ranges. Today, these range sets are illuminated in contrasting colours, but in 1970 they were illuminated identically. An inexperienced or inattentive mariner could have steered on Gooseneck Island Ranges when he should have been steering on the Weaver Shoal Ranges, a course that would probably lead his ship over Chrysler Shoal and directly onto Gooseneck Island, where EASTCLIFFE HALL suffered her first serious misfortune that night.

The progression of events that night led veteran mariners to speculate that a weary Capt. Groulx ordered the wheelsman to steer on the Weaver Shoal Ranges, and that he then decided to lie down upon the pilothouse settee. Possibly, his order as to which range set to follow was misunderstood (both sets are visible from Light 68) or, through inattention, the EASTCLIFFE HALL strayed onto the wrong set.