

S.S. Manasoo

“She’s Gone!”

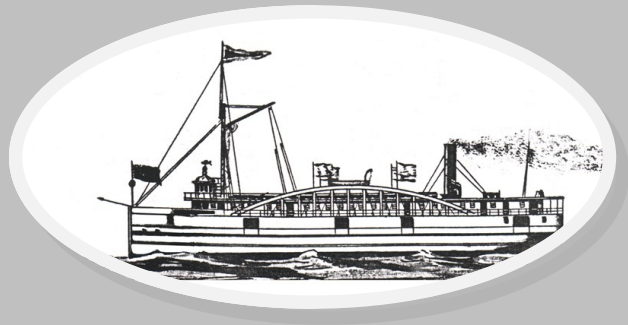
September 15, 1928



A Tragic Georgian Bay Story

STEAMBOAT STORIES

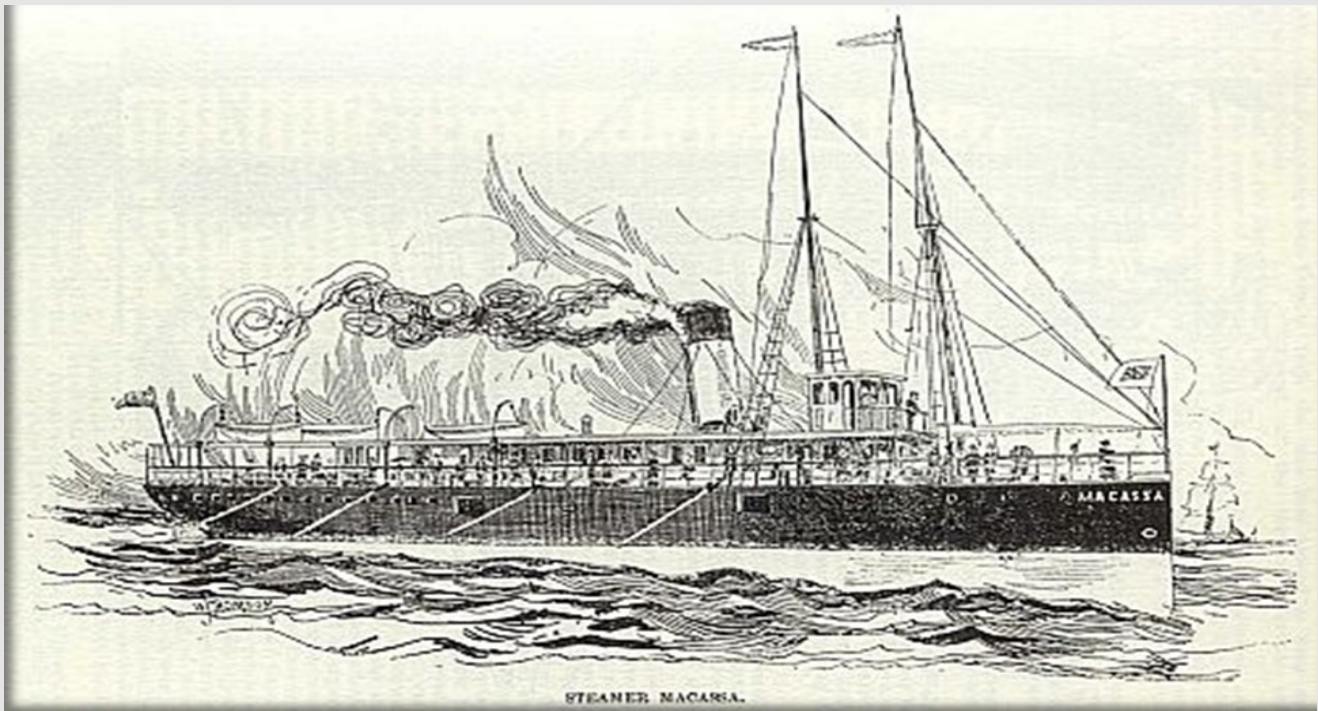
A collection of stories featuring vessels and events on the Upper
Great Lakes in the 19th and early 20th centuries



S.S. Manasoo “She’s Gone!”

The Birth of the Manasoo

The S.S. MANASOO began life in 1888 as the S.S. MACASSA built by William Hamilton & Co., Yard 064, Glasgow, Scotland. By the standards of the day there was nothing particularly



S.S.MACASSA as she was originally built in 1888 with open Promenade Deck
and counter sheer bow

remarkable about her. Her construction was one of thousands of steel ships built along the Clyde at the end of the 19th century. Like the CPR ships built in Scotland before her (ALGOMA, ATHABASCA, ALBERTA) S.S. MACASSA was designed for service on the Great Lakes.

Over the course of the William Hamilton Company's industrial history between 1877 and the end of the Second World War, the company built 75 ships. The 155 foot S.S. MACASSA was only 24.1 feet wide. She projected a sleek look almost like a large yacht. She was equipped with twin screws driven by two triple expansion engines powered by steam from a coal fired Scotch boiler. The result was that in addition to her sleek appearance, she was fast. That was just what the company in Canada, The Hamilton Steamboat Company wanted. Their plan was to put the vessel into service as a ferry serving Hamilton and Burlington Beach where summer vacationers could cool off from the downtown heat of Hamilton.

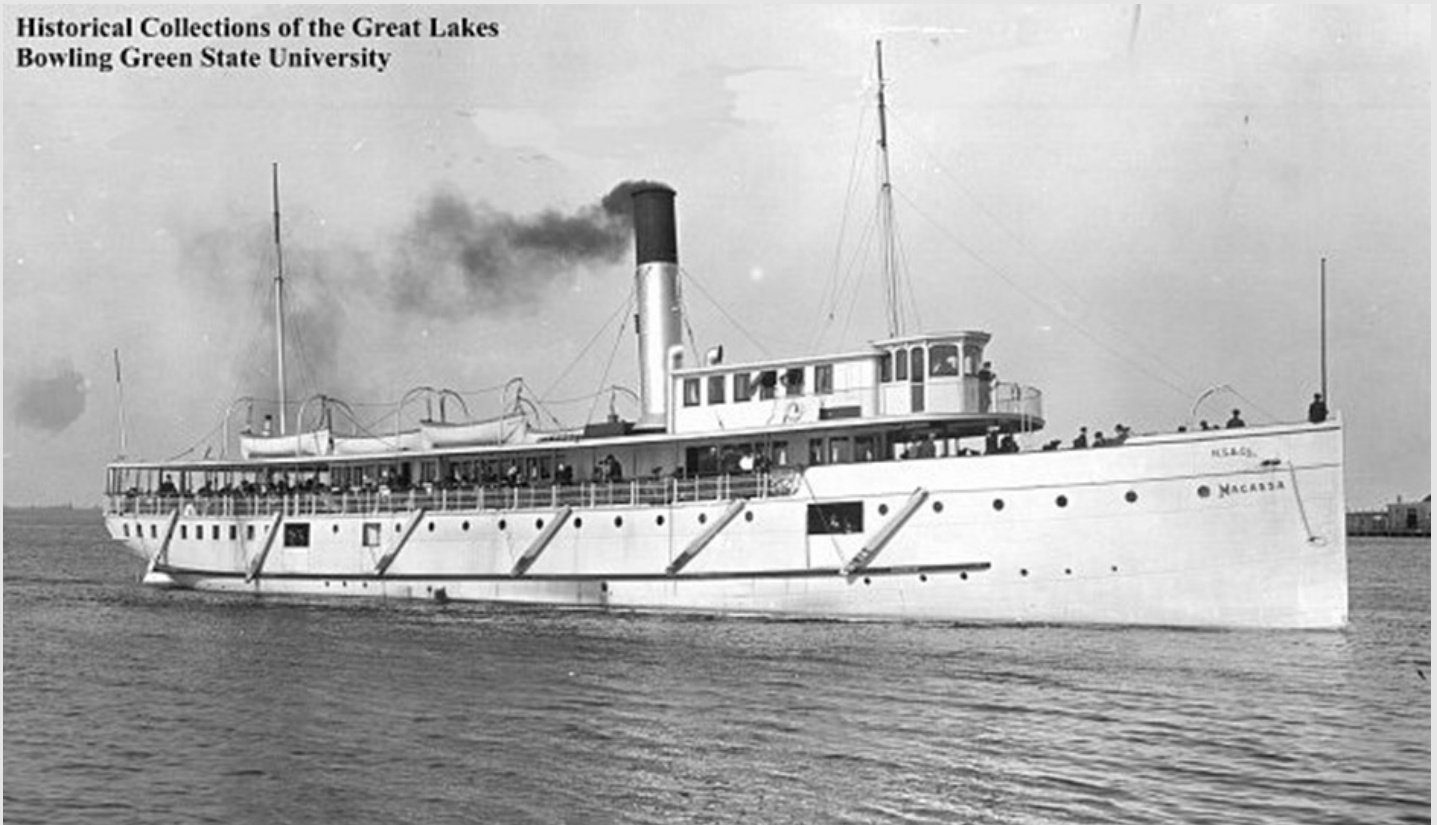
The Hamilton Spectator of May 1, 1888 reprinted a passage from the Glasgow Herald of Monday April 16, 1888 in which the interior was described:

“The arrangements made for the accommodation of passengers are of the most complete and handsome description. The principal saloon on the main deck is elegantly finished in polished hardwoods with carved panels of unique design representative of several nationalities as well as of various popular games and pastimes. The saloon is luxuriously upholstered, the sofas being done in plush velvet; handsome silk curtains on the windows and the floors are covered with velvet pile carpets. Arrangements are made for dining parties in this saloon, pantry and bar, etc. being fitted in similar style. The ladies cabin and retiring room are placed at the after-end of the saloon and are tastefully finished in white and gold, with similar upholstery to the saloon. The whole is lighted by large square windows, giving ample light and ventilation. A purser's room and ticket office is fitted at the forward end of the saloon and the Captain's cabin is on the opposite side. Lavatories,

galley and other conveniences are situated in the forward part of the main deck, which is also seated for passengers and arranged for carrying light freight. There are two gangway doors fitted on each side of the 'tween decks, forming passengers' entrances. Side-lights, 12" in diameter, are fitted all round. Crew accommodation is under the main deck, forward. On the upper deck there is a long house, the after part of which is fitted up as a deck saloon. This is finished in white and gold and is elegantly upholstered, containing four retiring rooms, furnished with all the usual fittings. The deck-house has large square sliding windows affording excellent light and ventilation. A handsome staircase leads from the deck saloon down to the main saloon. In the forward part of the deck-house, a smoking-room and bar are located and ahead of these is the wheel-house. The vessel is supplied throughout with electric light and she has two sets of triple expansion engines built by William Kemp of Govan. On leaving the ways, the vessel was named. S.S. MACASSA, the christening ceremony being gracefully performed by Miss E. B. Hamilton of Benclutha. The steamer is expected to sail for Canada early in May and will be under command of Capt. Hardie. Mr. Griffith, president of the Hamilton Steamboat Co. and Mr. McAulay of Hamilton were present at the launch."

The S.S. MACASSA sailed from Glasgow under the command of Captain Charles B. Hardie and arrived at her new home port of Hamilton Ontario in June, 1888. Captain Hardie remained as captain for only part of a year when his position was taken by a series of skippers over the next two decades.

The MACASSA proved to be popular and profitable. With a slight counter sheer on the bow, and a graceful cut at the stern, the ship looked every bit a pleasure craft. The main deck was closed in while the promenade deck was open so passengers could stroll around the entire vessel. Inside there was a small cabin for shelter when cool winds or rain



made strolling unpleasant. The pilothouse was perched above on the boat deck almost like the top tier of a wedding cake. The fine woodwork, crafted windows, and overall design added to the appearance of a vessel built for leisure. The forward mast was raked, as was the stack so that even while sitting at dockside, the MACASSA looked like she was ready for a race.

Competition on Lake Ontario for passengers broke out in 1904 when a larger vessel owned by a newly formed company placed a more powerful vessel on the same run. To meet this competition, MACASSA was sent to the Collingwood Shipbuilding Co. where she was lengthened by inserting an additional 23 feet in her middle to bring her length to just over 178



S.S.MACASSA at Niagara loading for a pleasure trip on Lake Ontario

feet. Officer's quarters and additional cabin space was added. Her carrying capacity increased while her speed remained good.

Unfortunately this lengthening may have created a problem. The ratio between length and beam changed from the original design and as a result MACASSA developed a significant roll in even moderate seas.

The rolling behaviour remained with her until the end and according to reports, was one of the unpleasant conditions expected on a routine trip around Lake Ontario.

By 1909, the Hamilton Steamboat Company lost control to the Eaton family of Toronto. Through a series of mergers and buy outs, ownership eventually drifted to ownership by Canada Steamship Lines (CSL). The focus of business changed to carrying freight along the shore from the Niagara area to Grimsby. She was also a regular visitor to the CNE grounds. By the mid 1920's the routes shifted to Toronto where competition from highway traffic created even smaller profit margins. She was subsequently laid up in Toronto in the fall of 1927.

Up on Georgian Bay, the Owen Sound Transportation Company (OSTC) had recently purchased the S.S. MODJESKA from the Hamilton Steamship Company in 1924. Like the S.S. MACASSA, S.S. MODJESKA was built in Scotland one a year later in 1889 but was a larger and heavier vessel. MODJESKA (renamed the S.S. MANITOULIN by the OSTC) was put into service out of the port of Owen Sound carrying passengers and freight to Manitoulin Island. When another of the OSTC's vessels the S.S. MICHIPICOTEN burned while docked at Silver Water on Manitoulin Island the OSTC wanted a

replacement. The obvious choice was the S.S. MACASSA, tied up in Hamilton.



S.S.MACASSA's promenade deck was closed in during the winter of 1927.
Passenger cabins were located on this deck.

In the Service of the Owen Sound Transportation Company

After some negotiation the Owen Sound Transportation bought the S.S. MACASSA and additional modifications began. As a result the appearance of the S.S. MACASSA changed. So did her name. She was now known as the S.S. MANASOO.



The S.S. MANASOO ready for service at dockside in Owen Sound, June 1928

The configuration for passengers and crew was altered to repurpose the ship for Georgian Bay commerce. The trade envisioned by the OSTC was for overnight passages to the many small ports on Georgian Bay and Manitoulin Island. There were new sleeping spaces for 70 persons in 34 staterooms (17 on each side of a corridor on the former promenade deck).

Each stateroom had at least three life preservers. An observation room for passengers was located aft.

The purser had a room on the main deck just behind the engine room. The captain and ship's officers were accommodated forward. The crew was in the after hold to make way for packaged freight.

Over the winter of 1927 the S.S. MANASOO remake was undertaken. When completed a certificate of seaworthiness was required before sailing. Everything from the pulleys, blocks, and lifeboats had to be checked. The thickness of metal plates on the hull had to be tested as were the port holes, davits, and ropes. Between March 20 and April 12, 1928 inspections done by Archibald Aiken Young for the Department of Marine and Fisheries pronounced the 40 year old ship fit to sail. Stability tests were not part of the inspections.

Once the MANASOO was declared ready to travel, cargo destined for Manitoulin Island and the north shore of Georgian Bay was loaded at a Toronto wharf. Although the Owen Sound Transportation Company (OSTC) was not ready to press their new vessel into full service directly, the plan was to off load the supplies from this initial voyage to Owen Sound and reload them to one of their other newly acquired steamers, the S.S. MANITOULIN.

The S.S. MANASOO left Toronto on April 22 despite the fact that the Owen Sound Harbour was not free from ice until April 23. Captain Norman McKay was at the helm. Besides the crew there were several carpenters aboard, finishing up trim work and wood working details. On the way she stopped at Goderich, rounded the Bruce Peninsula, where they ran into ice conditions near Lion's Head. The seas were a bit rough and several of the crew and carpenters were sea sick but they continued working. The ship called at Lion's Head and Wiarton before arriving at Owen Sound on Friday April 27 around 5 o'clock. The trip which normally took no more than three days took five because of the

conditions out on the lake.

After unloading the Manitoulin Island destined cargo at Owen Sound, the MANASOO pressed on to the Collingwood shipyards and dry dock where a further inspection was scheduled. Boilers were inspected, bushings on the propellers were replaced, and the shaft modified. By the end of May the S.S. MANASOO was ready to go.

The S.S. MANASOO now had four life boats (3 made of wood, 1 of steel) each with a capacity of 28 persons. Each lifeboat was mounted on chocks and fastened on radial type davits with a guy on each end. Each lifeboat had a set of oars. By September 1928, none of the lifeboats had been launched in a drill, nor were crew assigned to positions at specific lifeboats. A wooden life raft that looked like a large pallet underpinned by water tight pontoons was stowed forward untethered on the top deck. The reason for not tying this raft down was so that in an emergency it would float free thereby providing a sound floating surface for those unable to deploy the lifeboats but were able to swim away from the sinking ship.

From June until September 10, 1928 the MANASOO travelled on a regular timetable transporting pleasure seekers, business men, farmers, and salesmen to and from Manitoulin Island. There was licensed capacity for 70 passengers. At the end of the passenger season in September the ship was taken out of regular service and repurposed for moving livestock. Now large pens were set up on the main deck. Linens were stowed away except for a few staterooms where the few remaining waiters took advantage of the unoccupied spaces to escape from their cramped quarters below.



Captain John McKay

The End of Season 1928

1927 and 1928 were good years for farmers. Prices were high and demand for cattle was better than it had been for years. Drovers from southwestern Ontario travelled to Manitoulin ports like



First Mate Oz Long

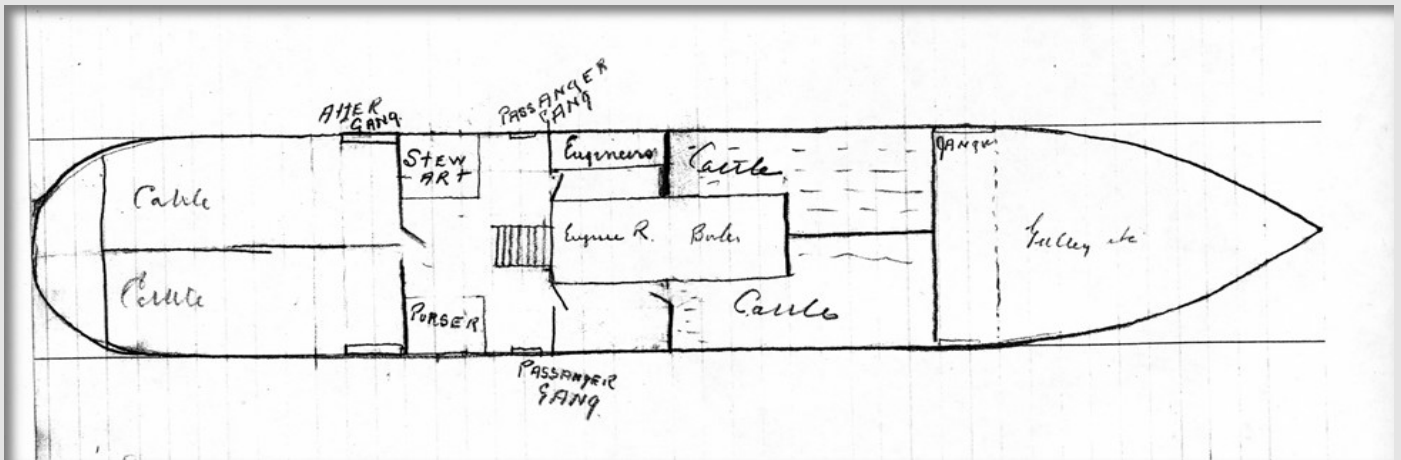
Manitowaning, West Bay, and Gore Bay to buy livestock for the markets back home. Farmers on the island arranged to sell their summer grass fed cattle to buyers who travelled about making deals to move cattle south on the S.S. HIBOU, S.S. MANASOO, and the S.S. MANITOULIN.

Tuesday the 11th of September was the first of the after season trips for Captain John Ross McKay and his crew aboard the S.S. MANASOO. The shift in service to strictly livestock transport meant that waiters who were students could return to school and the total crew numbers were slightly reduced. A watchman and a wheelsman were transferred to the S.S. MANITOULIN.

44 year old McKay was formerly master of the S.S. MICHIPCOTEN before it burned. His family had a long history on the Great Lakes and financial involvement in the OSTC. Osborne (Oz) Long his First Mate began sailing in 1919 and picked up his mate's papers in 1924. His previous experience as Mate was on the S.S. MANITOULIN before he shipped on board the S.S. MANASOO in the spring of 1928. Thomas McUtchen, the First Engineer, was a married 37 year old recent immigrant from Scotland with a small family of two children under 3 years old. His experience was on salt water passenger liners. His Second Engineer, Francis Alan Scott (42), came from an Owen Sound Great

Lakes sailing family. Scott had three brothers, all sailing the lakes. The ship's officers were therefore not short of know-how around boats.

The Second Mate, Frank Hutcheson, a 23 year old from Shallow Lake did not have his papers. He had 2 children at home. The wheelsman, Maitland Beattie was only 26 but he counted 5 years' experience in American waters. He was relatively new to the S.S. MANASOO. Edward Stewart arrived in Owen Sound in the spring of 1928 looking for work. He found a job as porter at the Queens Hotel where he worked until he



Sketch of the main deck of the S.S. MANASOO showing the location of the cattle pens fore and aft and the gangways. The galley is forward. The engine and boiler are amidships.

landed the position as watchman aboard the S.S. MANASOO. When he lived in Ireland he worked as a steward aboard an Irish ship.

It is clear that these sailors were relatively young but seasoned in the ways of sailing.

Donald Wallace, a cattleman, drove his car up to Owen Sound from Oil Springs near Sarnia Ontario. His friend Thomas Lambert came along with him for company. The plan was for Wallace to purchase a large number of cattle from farmers all around Manitoulin Island. In all he bought about \$5600 worth and had only about \$300 left in his pocket at the end of his buying spree. Thomas Turner a farmer from Manitoulin

Island added another 18 cattle to the herd purchased by Wallace. These cattle were loaded at West Bay on Manitoulin Island.

This was Wallace's first experience to transport cattle by boat. He noticed that unlike transport by railway box cars where bedding was hay, bedding on the MANASOO was sawdust, pen slats were not nailed to posts, they were tied and knotted with rope to metal stantions, and pens had two plank slats instead of four or five. He said nothing as he figured the crew knew what they were doing. In fact this penning technique was used the week before on the S.S. MANASOO and it was quite satisfactory.

The main deck where the cattle were loaded was about 3' above the waterline.

As they were getting ready to leave port, Wallace's auto was driven onto the main deck. It was placed forward and

secured with chocks under the wheels. There was no ballast in the hold. Four large steel barrels filled with sand were stowed on the main deck and could be moved from side to side to correct for trim balance. All the portholes on the main deck were opened for ventilation; cattle produce a lot of hot, humid, smelly air. The doors of the gangways were closed and secured with steel bars.



Lighthouse at Griffith Island

From West Bay the MANASOO sailed to Manitowaning on the east side of the island. On September 14th the MANASOO left Manitowaning at noon expecting to arrive at Owen Sound in the early morning of September 15.

Loading, safety, and placement of the heavy load were the responsibilities of First Mate Oz Long. Under his directions, deckhands drove the cattle through the gangway to the after part of the main deck then sorted them into pens later. In all there were 116 cattle distributed into 4 pens, each about 40' long and varying from 8' to 12' wide. The standing cattle had enough room to turn around but that was about all. An additional small pen was set up for the one bull on board. The forward pens were for lighter cattle of about 800 pounds. The afterdeck cattle averaged about 1100 pounds each. In all the total weight was estimated at 60 tons.

Captain McKay did a cursory inspection of the ship noting that there was a draft of 6' forward and 9'3" aft. His ship was trim. Everything was ship shape as they pulled away from the dock at Manitowaning heading for Owen Sound.

The planned course was relatively straight forward: sail south along the Bruce Peninsula coast past Dyers Bay, Lion's Head, Cape Croker, Griffith Island, and then to Owen Sound. They would arrive in the early morning.

Over She Goes

It was a partly clear evening when Wallace and his friend had beef steak dinner at 6:00 p.m. aboard the MANASOO. After dinner they sat out on the deck then went to bed in their stateroom on the port side of the ship about 9:00 p.m. By then clouds had moved in and the ship rolled lightly. Wallace took the upper bunk; Lambert the lower. The bunks were so situated that their feet were pointing to the cabin door.

They had a small bottle of whisky in their room just in case of sea sickness. Wallace said later that he only had a teaspoon full at bed time. The ship “was going nicely” with a gentle roll when they fell asleep after 10:00 p.m. The two were awakened by a slight list, pitching seas, and an electrical storm well after midnight but they went back to sleep.

The winds picked up to 25 mph, light gale force, creating large waves out on open Georgian Bay. Conditions became worse so Captain McKay turned around to seek shelter behind Griffith Island. While this course change was completed, suddenly both Lambert and Wallace were awakened by a sharp list. The list was sharp enough to slide the mattress to the foot of the bed. Lambert jumped out of his bed.

He shouted, “What is the matter?”



Oiler Roy Fox

Wallace answered “We better get out of here. I think this thing is going wrong.”

At this point they steadied themselves, pulled on their trousers, and climbed up out of the open cabin doorway as the slant of the room was steep enough to compel them to pull themselves up over the threshold to escape into the alley way. Water was breaking into the portside cabin windows and they heard the glass giving way to the pressure of the sea. There was a pounding noise aft.

At the same time the Second Mate, Frank Hutcheson, ran past exclaiming “My God, My God” while swinging a lifebelt above his head. He said nothing more and disappeared down the now slanting alley.

Lambert struggled to put on a life belt. Wallace could not find his in the cabin. Together they made their way to a metal ladder to climb to the top deck where a number of sailors were already at the rail, about to scramble over onto the now severely listing hull. Wallace who had experienced a boiler explosion in the past was afraid that the ship’s boiler would explode. There was no chance that he would stay aboard waiting for a potential blast. He mounted the rail, ran down the side of the upturned hull and leapt into the water. He never saw his friend Lambert again.

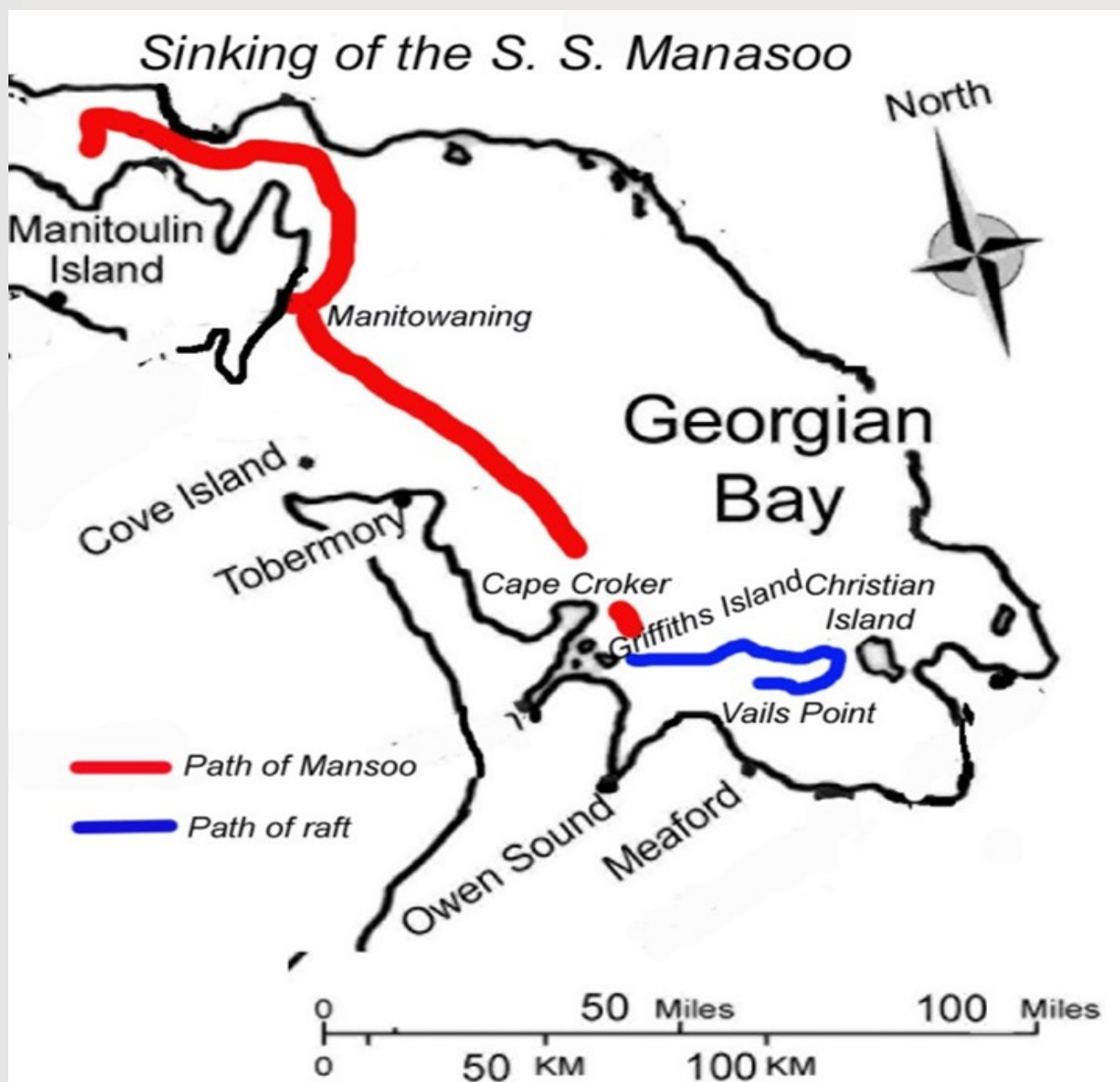


Purser Art Middleboro

Just prior to the sharp list, the Captain, the First Mate, the Wheelsman, and Second Mate were all in the wheelhouse. The officers in the wheelhouse were confounded that the list was on the port side, the direction the wind was blowing from. As the list seemed to be sustained, Captain McKay ordered Mate Oz Long to go below and trim the ship with the sand barrels sowed on the main deck. With the help of a few deckhands the barrels were rolled to the starboard side. Wallace’s car was just being moved when the S.S. MANASOO tipped on her side. Dishes in the galley crashed to the floor.

Down below during the first light list Oiler, Roy Fox assisted rolling the barrels to trim the MANASOO to solve what was considered a manageable problem. He then went to the dining room

to grab something to eat. There was a still slight list. While there for only a few minutes Fireman, Dougal McLean came up from the stoke hole wearing a life belt shouting “She’s Gone!” At that point Fox left his tea on the table, grabbed a life belt, and followed McLean up the centre stairs to the top deck. The ship was now listing so heavily that the port side was underwater. Lifeboats could not be launched from there. Realizing that the starboard life boats on the high side were his only chance, Fox dug into his pocket and took out his jack knife then cut some of the ropes holding the forward starboard life boat. The boat was wedged into the davits. It refused to budge.



Art Middleboro, a medical student working at his summer job as Purser, sleeping in his underwear, woke up at the first moderate list and noticed that his tickets were hanging on a slant. He did not go back to sleep but stayed in his bunk for a few minutes until he became concerned as the ship gradually listed further and further to her port side. He scrambled out of bed, made his way in his BVDs through the dining room to see if the windows were closed to the spray now lashing the ship, and then headed for the wheelhouse.

When he got there after a few minutes he asked “Why is the ship listing like this?” The reply from one of the officers was, “I don’t know.” As Middleboro stood waiting outside the wheelhouse the ship gradually rolled onto her side. At this point he grabbed a lifebelt from the Mate’s room, climbed the rail and stepped onto the hull. Behind him was the Chief Engineer who reported “the back end is full of water”.

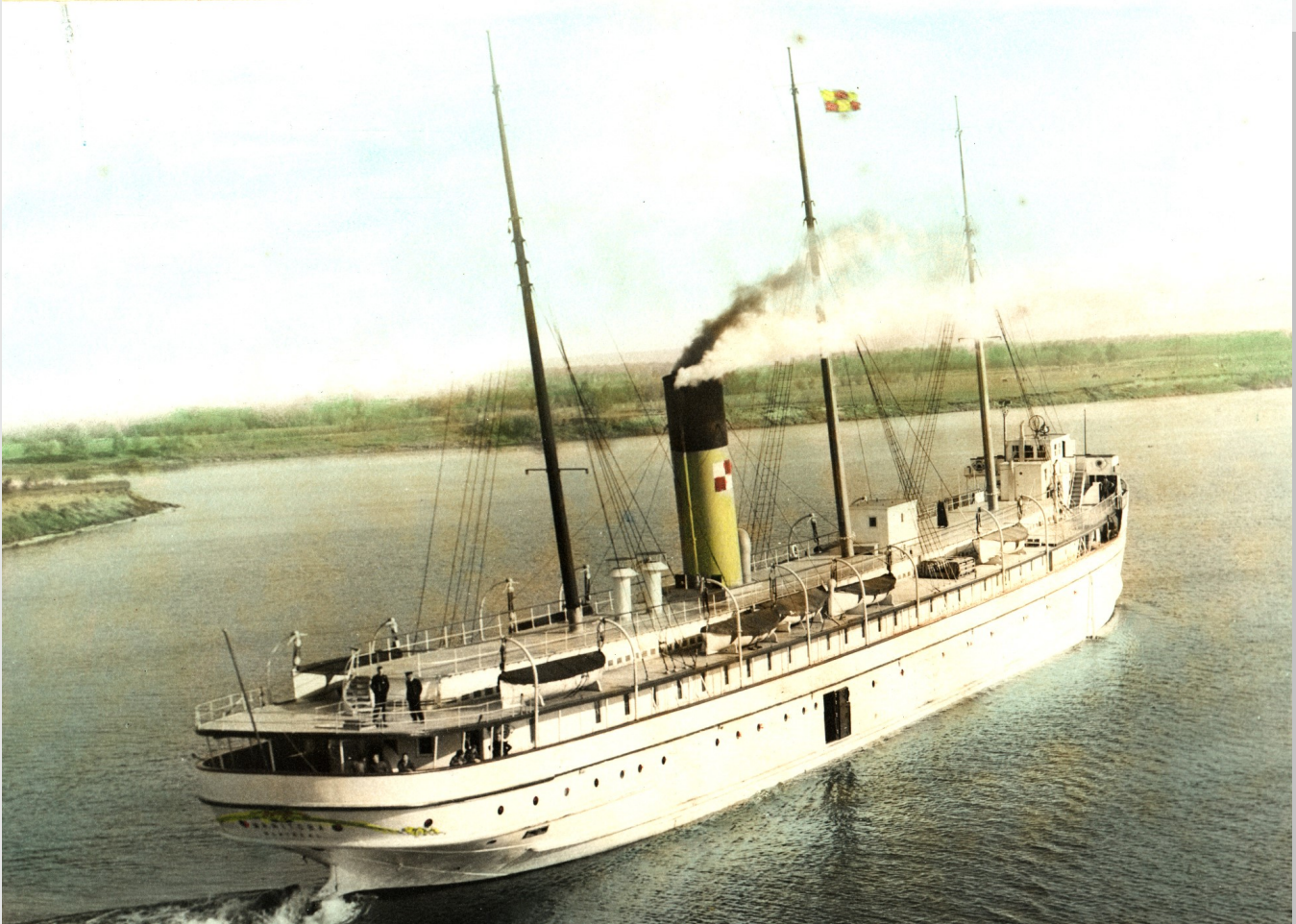
One after the other they made their way toward the keel then they jumped into the angry dark lake, realizing the ship was doomed. Each swam away from the sinking vessel to escape being sucked under as it sank. It did sink moments later. Over his shoulder purser Middleboro saw the MANA OO with her bow strait up twenty-five feet in the air before the ship plunged stern first into Georgian Bay just east of Griffith Island.

Middleboro, who was a strong swimmer, swam in the direction of the shore. As he escaped from the now doomed boat, others jumped into the heavy seas as the ship went down. Some who jumped just before Middleboro were non swimmers. They tried to grab him but he shook them off. The men were weeping and crying the



S.S. CARIBOU

last he saw of them. After about thirty five stokes he thought he saw cattle in the water some distance away. He was mistaken. It was the life raft. It had floated off the top deck.



The CPR steamer **MANITOBA** passed downbound to Port McNicholl and did not see the men on the raft

Six Men on a Raft

On board the life raft were the oiler, Roy Fox, the Captain, and the Chief Engineer. Once Middleboro managed to climb aboard, Donald Wallace without his friend Lambert made it to the now overloaded raft. Next the Mate, “Ozzie” Long, at the end of his strength managed to grab hold. In all six members of the crew made it to the raft. Roy Fox, Arthur Middleboro, Captain John McKay, Chief Engineer



Thomas McUtchen, Mate Osborne Long (Oz), Passenger Donald Wallace.

The men sat on their slatted raft and noticed that the Griffith Island lighthouse was about a half mile away. They had no paddle so they used their hands in an attempt to reach the island. The raft was a cumbersome thing and moved little toward their target. One of the survivors noticed an oar floating about twenty-five yards away. Straight away Middleboro still clad only in his underwear and a life belt dove into the lake and retrieved it. At this point they were about a quarter of a mile from Griffiths Island. The oar proved to be too heavy and unmanageable to use effectively so they made no progress. Long and Middleboro entered the water again in an attempt to kick and push the raft to shore. It was then a west wind picked up and started to blow them away from possible safety. They despaired except for a faint hope a ship passing by would rescue them.

Little did they know that Captain Batten on the steamer S. S. CARIBOU

was almost abreast of them when the MANASOO went down. Batten was outbound to Sault Ste. Marie. Neither did they know that the CPR steamer S. S. MANITOBA passed by downbound for Port McNicholl at about the same time. Neither of these crews realized the tragedy that had just happened.

At first light Oz Long saw two of the ship's lifeboats on the horizon. One was possibly the one Fox attempted to cut away. The men on the raft saw two men hanging on to the upturned boat in the distance but within half an hour it drifted away and it was never seen again. One of the men was identified as either Ely Shawana or his cousin Ambrose Shawana

The raft drifted further and further to the east as the sun rose in the morning. It was a welcome source of warmth to the six men crowded into the centre of the small platform that was sinking further and



Rescue of the crew of the MANASOO

further into the water. One the buoyancy barrels appeared to be taking on water. By noon Saturday it was clear and hot, hot enough to burn and blister their exposed skin.

Saturday night came with no rescue so they toughed out another night of cold and wave washed existence. They huddled together in the centre of the raft to keep warm under clear skies and a crescent moon. Night turned to day Sunday morning and they faced another scorching sun blazing down from a cloudless sky. There was new hope as

they realized that the raft was lumbering slowly to Christian Island. Surely someone would see them. Captain McKay knew the lake well.

He calculated their speed and considered the wind direction and figured that they would be blown into Christian Island or Nottawasaga Point in a few hours. The fates were not with the survivors.

The west wind gradually shifted to south east. They were not being blown to Christian Island.

They were drifting back towards

Griffith Island. The raft seemed to be sinking further and further as the pontoons took on water. They were now sitting in the cold water as it lapped over the top of the platform. Sundown Sunday found the six still alive suffering from exposure. All night long there was a repeat of the previous night, only now the seas were heavier, it poured rain, and there was a lightning filled sky. By Monday morning they were convinced they would die. The Chief Engineer, Thomas McUtchen became unconscious around noon and died about 2:00 p.m. Monday. They removed his clothing and distributed it among the remaining five. Middleboro, who was still in his underwear got most. With little ceremony his body was rolled into the water.

McUtchen's body was never recovered.

They were now drifting between Vail's Point and Hope Island having spent sixty long hours on a raft that was barely floating. All were suffering from hypothermia. Several were badly sunburned. Without much freeboard, water washed over the men constantly. It was a desperate situation.



Life ring from the MANASOO washed ashore

The Rescue and Aftermath

At 3:15 p.m. the CPR S.S. MANITOBA was on her outbound trip from Port McNicoll to Sault Ste. Marie. First Officer Jack McCannell spotted the raft twelve miles off the Cape Rich shore. He reversed engines, blew an alarm signal and called Captain Francis Davis who took command. McCannell rounded up several deckhands and prepared to launch number seven life boat on the starboard side.

Captain Davis maneuvered his ship close enough for the rescue while standing off a safe distance. It was a difficult launch as the waves were running high and the loaded lifeboat bounced around as it was lowered into Georgian Bay. Ropes were cast off and the sailors rowed to the raft, now with only five survivors. All five were safely returned to the Manitoba and thence to the Owen Sound hospital.

Meanwhile a major search was mounted for additional survivors using small craft, tugs, and two airplanes. All that was found was spread from Thornbury to Hope Island.

The body of fireman Dougal McLean was discovered in an out of the way location at the “Clay Banks” near Vail’s Point. He had his working clothes on and a lifebelt wrapped around his neck. It was determined at an inquest later in the week that McLean had strangled to death rather than drowning.

A full investigation of the sinking was ordered by the Department of the Marine to take place in Owen Sound the first week of October. The highly respected Dominion Government Commissioner, Captain Leander Demers was appointed to lead the investigation. Witnesses including the survivors, naval architects, and company officials were called. The documents produced more than 440 pages of testimony and over 100 pages of supporting documents and letters.

The newspapers were filled with the goings on. Rumours abounded in the city. This was fueled by the testimony of Donald Wallace who claimed that Captain McKay, while on the raft, told his crew that they had to agree on one story. There were many “I could not say” answers by the crew when questioned at the inquiry. Of particular interest to Demers was the fact that there were four persons in the wheelhouse at the time the ship went over. It is not clear what he was driving at. Other questioners zeroed in on the way the cattle were penned in the main deck. The officers maintained that they did not know why the MANASOO sank.

Demers Report said;

First, the shipwas in a safe sea-worthy condition.

Second, that the stowing of the cattle was improperly attended to.

Third, there appear to have been neglect in leaving ports open when bad weather existed, brought on perhaps through the fact the ship was performing her last trip, which included indifference.

Fourth, that the loss of lives is attributable to lack of judgement, perception, organization, and neglect on the part of the Master and First Officer...

Captain John McKay’s and Osborne Long’s certificates were revoked by authorities on Demer’s recommendation. Community members, lake captains and lawyers sent petitions and letters to fill the mailbox of the Minister of Marine. They supported the two officers and requested that their papers be reinstated. Demers remained adamant in his decision, their certificates should remain revoked.

In the end, by July 1930, the Minister reinstated Mate Long’s certification and McKay was certified only as a Mate. McKay refused to accept the demotion. Protestations continued until John McKay had his Captain’s Certificate returned in December 1930.

The Armchair Analysis

A number of factors contributed to the sinking of the MANASOO.

By themselves they were insignificant but when amalgamated the disaster was unavoidable.

When the ship was lengthened by 23 feet in 1904, the ratio of length to breadth created instability causing the MACASSA (later the MANASOO) to roll easily in heavy seas. Modifications to the superstructure contributed to the imbalance. Stability tests were not part of the inspection routine used to give the ship a seaworthy certificate.

The laws of physics coupled with the loading of the cattle on the main deck and the fact that there was no ballast under the hold or cargo in the hold moved the centre of buoyancy and the centre of gravity to an unstable position.

The fact that 4 barrels of sand on the main deck were used to trim the ship indicates a routine problem that in fact was only a bandage solution to a top heavy load.

The cattle were loose in the pens. When the ship listed heavily the untethered cattle would crowd to the low side. The flimsy slatted pens would break further sending additional cattle to the low side, causing a sudden lurch.

The initial flooding at the stern of the ship may have been caused by an insecure door on the port side. The waves were large and possibly stove in an improperly closed door. The open portholes on the main deck once submerged would allow tons of water in when the ship was on her side.

The Crew of the Manasoo

NAME	DUTY	COMMENT
Sing Quon	Chef	Toronto. Had been with then ship all season
Hum Tom	Chef	Toronto, Elizabeth Street. Had been with then ship all season
Wesley Galbraith	Deck Hand/ watchman	Tara, First trip on the Manasoo, Age 18
Joseph Mansour	Waiter	Little Current. Age 21
Roy Fox	Oiler	Owen Sound, Survived on the raft
Maitland Beattie	Wheelsman	Owen Sound. First trip on the Manasoo. Had sailed for 5 years, Age 26
Donald Rose	Waiter	Annan. Family had moved around as his father was a minister. Age 19
Ely Shawana	Deck Hand	Sheguindah. Age 17
Ambrose Shawana	Deck Hand	Manitowaning. cousin of Ely Age 16
Dougald McLean	Fireman	Burgoyne. Age 24
Gordon Baird	Deckhand	Annan. Age 15
Clark Fox	Fireman	Owen Sound. brother of Roy Fox who survived Age 18
Francis Scott	2 nd Engineer	Owen Sound. Age 41
Edward Stewart	Watchman	Belfast, Ireland.
Frank Hutchinson	2 nd Mate	Shallow Lake. Age 23
Thomas Lambert	Passenger	Oil Springs

Selected Sources

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