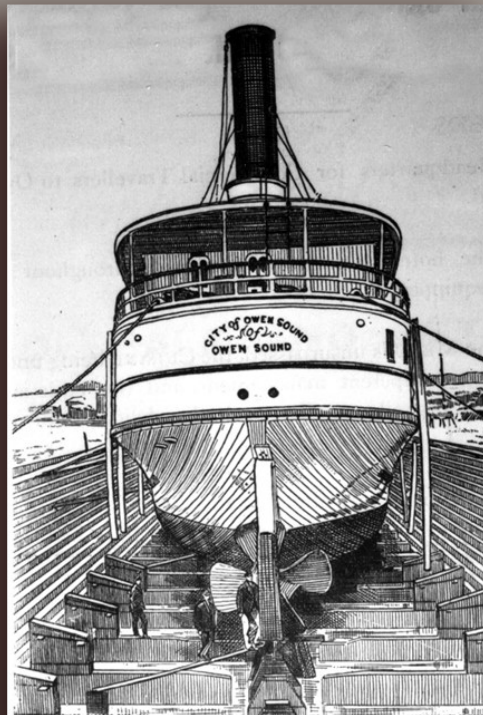


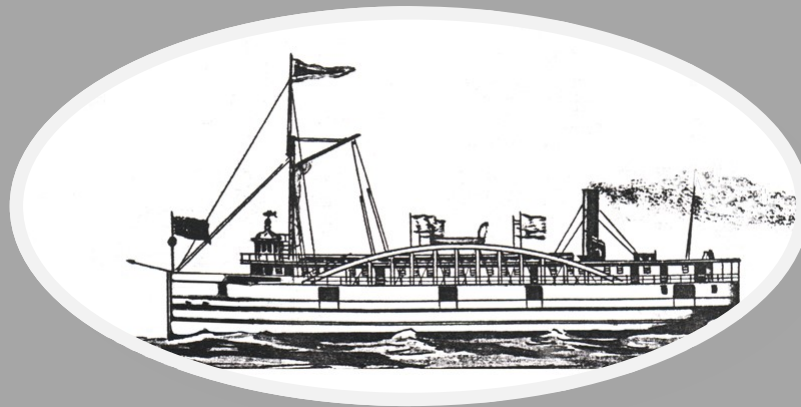
THE MISFORTUNES
OF THE
S.S. CITY OF OWEN SOUND



1875 - 1901

STEAMBOAT STORIES

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

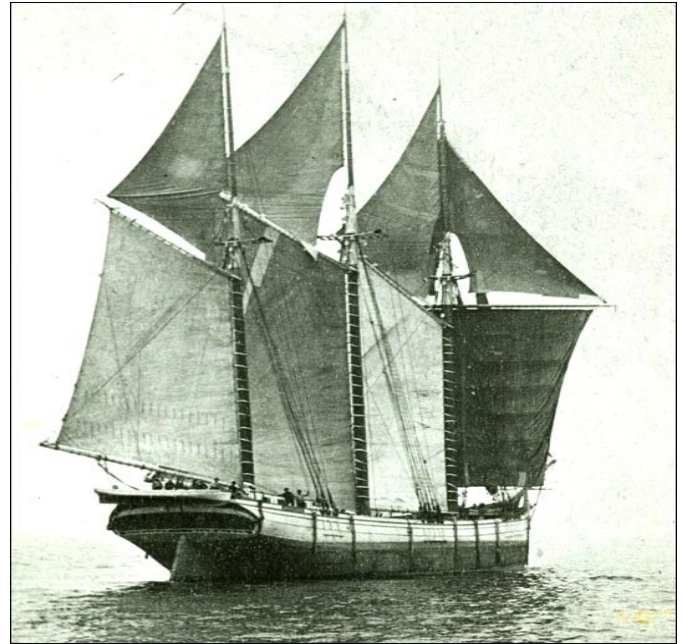


The Misfortunes of the *City of Owen Sound*

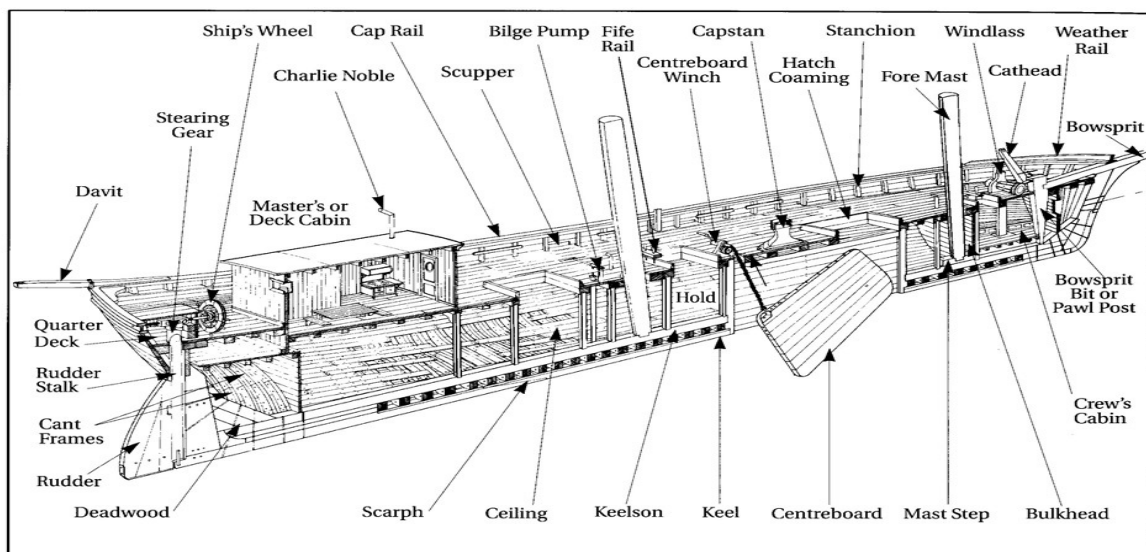
A Dual Launch Day

On Tuesday June 25, 1875, a crowd of over 6000 persons arrived at the docks in Owen Sound. They were there to watch the dual launch of the *Belle McPhee* and the brand new propeller-driven steamship, *City of Owen Sound*.

The *Belle McPhee* was built by Alexander McPhee at Owen Sound. She was one of thousands of schooners plying the Great Lakes in the 19th and early 20th centuries.



Typical Great Lakes square stern schooner.



Cross Section of a typical Great Lakes schooner of the 19th Century

The *Belle McPhee* was a wooden three masted square stern schooner initially built in 1872. She was in the Owen Sound dry dock in 1875 to be lengthened twenty feet. The *McPhee* was originally designed primarily to carry bulk cargo like grain, lumber, coal, or salt. At times the boat carried iron and other non-perishable goods. Typically she carried a crew of 5 or 6 and a cook. Often the cook was the wife of the captain. A round trip from Owen Sound to Toronto to Owen Sound was 15 – 20 days in good weather. In calm weather schooners were towed as



The *Belle McPhee* was grounded in 1876 near Thornbury Ontario and the crew was rescued by sailors from nearby Meaford. (NOTE The image is not of the *Belle McPhee* and is representational only)

a consort by tugs to improve their travel time but towing was expensive. The advantage of a schooner was that it was relatively inexpensive to operate.

Unfortunately the *Belle McPhee* only lasted a year after her return trip to the Owen Sound dry dock for lengthening. Loaded with 10,000 bushels of grain she was caught in an ice jam on May 11, 1876, eight miles northwest of the Collingwood lighthouse. Her planks were stove-in and she sank in fifty fathoms of water. The crew narrowly escaped in lifeboats dispatched from Meaford.

That was the end of the *Belle McPhee*.

By contrast the *City of Owen Sound* survived several mishaps. Unlike the schooner *Belle McPhee*, the *City of Owen Sound* was a steam powered ship. She was wooden like all the others but her propulsion was by a propeller as opposed to the more common side wheel steamers. Steamboats were capital intensive to build and to run. As a result these vessels were financed by well off people or corporations. They often reused parts of steamboats that had sunk or been decommissioned.

John Simpson, the brother of Melancthon Simpson, the builder of the famed side wheeler

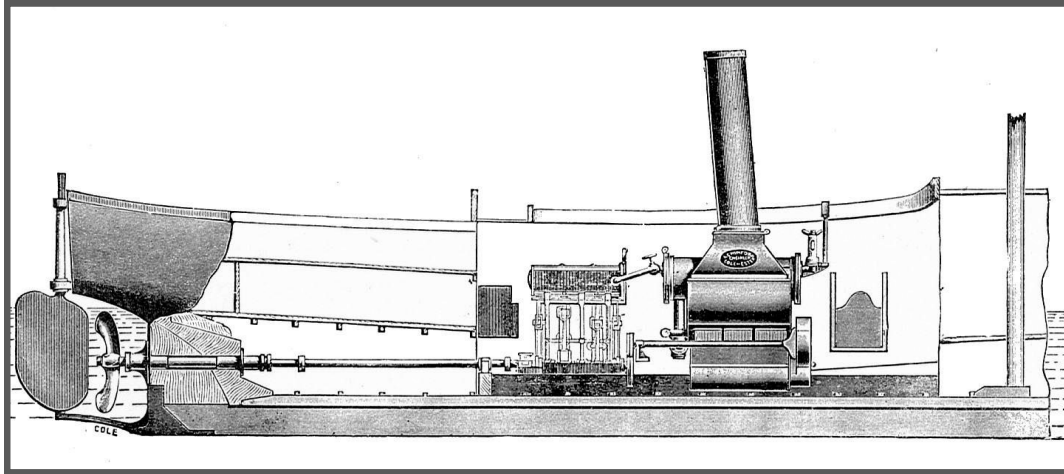


The propeller *City of London* burned at the dock at Collins Inlet in August 1874. Archie Campbell a crewman perished while 30 passengers escaped the inferno. The ship burned to the waterline. Her engine and boilers were placed in the *City of Owen Sound*.

Frances Smith, moved to Owen Sound in 1874 to prepare for the construction of the 172 foot *City of Owen Sound*. John had a reputation for building fine ships just like his brother. The year before he moved to Owen Sound he and a partner built the 200 foot *Quebec*, a propeller, in Chatham for the Beatty Line. When she was put into service the *Quebec* got rave reviews by the Buffalo Commercial Advertiser for her speed and large stowage capacity. John Simpson's career was set.

Not everything in the *City of Owen Sound* was new. Her engine was salvaged from the

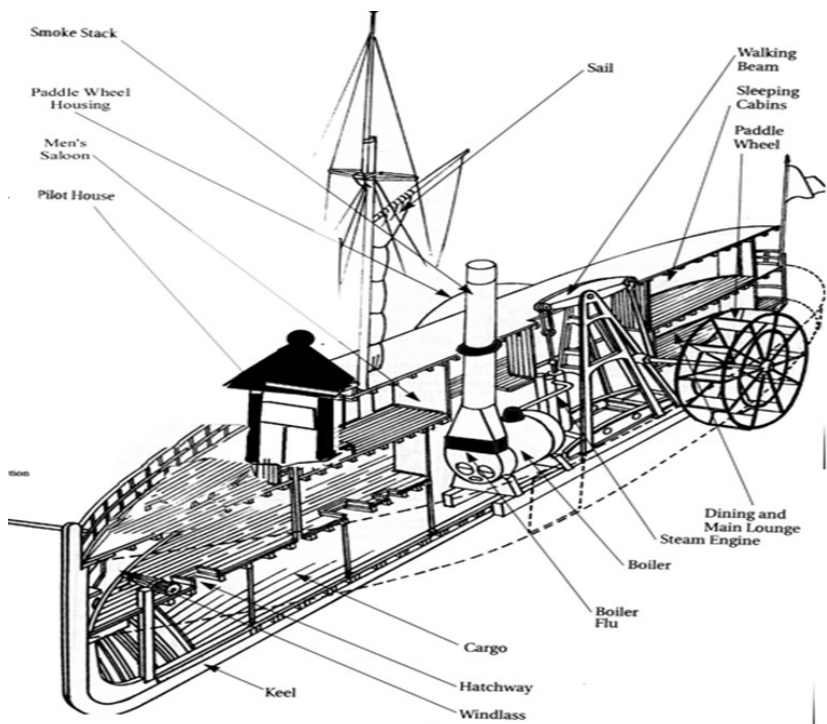
steamer *City of London*, built in 1866. The *City of London* burned at Collins Inlet in early 1874 and was towed to Owen Sound to have her engine removed. Once removed the burned out skeleton was then towed to Balmy Beach and sunk just north of the city. The engine was old yet still serviceable. Steam was provided by a wood fired boiler. It was adequate for the new job on the *City of Owen Sound*.



Above is a typical propeller steamboat engine and boiler from the 1870s. Wood fired burners consumed prodigious amounts of cordwood, requiring frequent stops to “wood up”. The *City of Owen Sound* was initially a wood burner. It converted to coal in 1883. The machinery in a propeller driven vessel did not

take up nearly the room as that in a sidewheel steamer.

Side wheelers required extra machinery to convert the direction of the propulsion mechanisms to drive the paddle wheels. This required a heavy “walking beam” which occasionally broke down.



Launching the *City of Owen Sound*

The *City of Owen Sound* was not built for luxury. It was a utilitarian design to initially be a workhorse for the Chicago and Sarnia line with connections to the Grand Trunk Railroad. In her first year she carried salt from Kincardine to Chicago and grain from Chicago back to Georgian Bay. She was simply an addition to a small fleet owned by John Pridgeon.

There were two rows of staterooms on the promenade deck separated by an open area used as a lounge and dining room. The state rooms did not extend the full length of the deck. Only two lifeboats were placed on the upper deck. Below on the main deck the engine and deck crew slept at the stern. The remainder of the crew slept forward except for the officers who had their own quarters on the upper deck.

Cargo was stored on the main deck and in the hold. Freight was loaded manually through large doors on each side of the ship.

Launch day, June 25, 1875 was a perfect day. Bright and sunny. Farmers from the countryside arrived in wagons and buggies with their families aboard. The steamer *Okonra* came from Keppel with scores of the curious. (The *Okonra* burned at the dock in Wiarton in September 1878.) Another steamer, the *McCarroll*, arrived from Meaford with dignitaries and ordinary citizens out for an excursion. She docked at an advantageous viewing point on the east side of the harbour. A trainload of company officials from Toronto pulled into the railway station, disembarked and walked over the bridge of the Sydenham River.



The *City of Owen Sound* at the Owen Sound inner harbour before cabin expansions. The small vessel in the centre right is the ill fated *Wabano*. The schooner on the right could possibly be the *Bell McPhee*. The date of the photo is probably 1875.

to the launch site on the west side. Among them was one of the owners, Alexander Smith, who was also a politician of some note. He and his business friends, with their families were there to celebrate the grand event. Smith and his partner William Walter Keigley had a very successful wholesale company in Toronto. They were interested in expanding into the shipping business. This was an early stage in corporate development of Canadian shipping. Smith had demonstrated his interest in shipping while on the Toronto Board of Trade, pushing for expansion of Toronto's harbour. Now he was planning to connect his Toronto business to the growing trade out of Georgian Bay.



Loading the *City of Owen Sound* at a small unidentified port in the early days

Workers from the shipyard were poised to begin hammering the blocks that held the *Belle McPhee* on the ways. The *Belle* had to be launched first, as it was in the way of the *City of Owen Sound*. On the signal, the men began hammering. Nothing happened. The *Belle McPhee* just sat there unmoving. A heavy hawser was eventually secured to her keel and the tug *Hand* gave a “full steam ahead” pull. Under the strain, the hawser broke and the tug careened to the opposite side of the harbour, running onto the eastern shore. On the second attempt, the schooner slipped into the river, narrowly missing the wharf of the *Frances Smith*. The spectators loved the drama. Cheers and applause greeted the successful launch. Meanwhile the blocks holding the new steamer *City of Owen Sound*

were knocked out of place. A decorated bottle of wine was broken over the bow by the daughter of the new captain, Captain Wyatt. At just the right moment the *City of Owen Sound* teetered for a moment then glided into the river, flags flying and church bells ringing in the back ground. The *Owen Sound Advertiser* stated “as she careened over ...the incline of the ways the noble vessel rushed into the water , then she rose, heeled over to the other side, then steadied herself and sat like a swan in the water.” The band of the 31st Infantry Battalion played for the enjoyment of all.

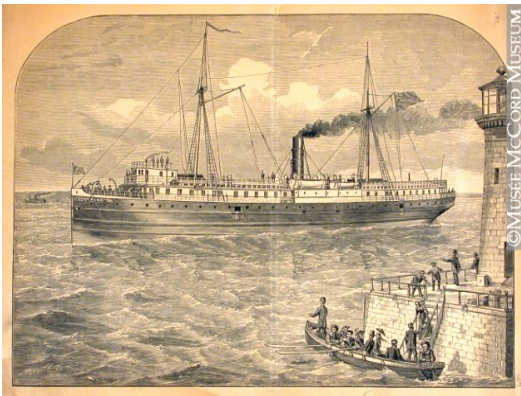
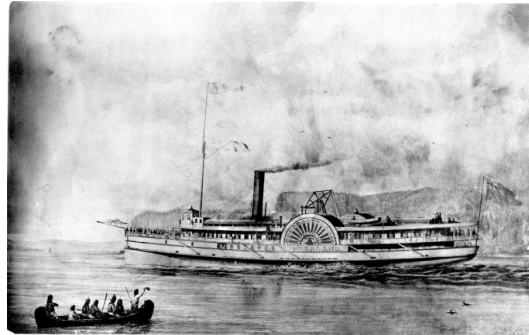
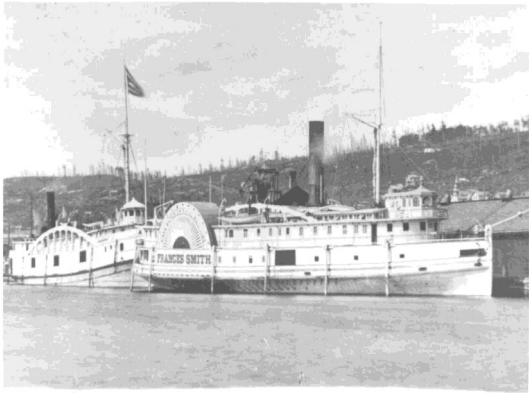
There were more cheers and loud applause. In the speeches that followed, the mayor, Thomas Scott, presented a set of flags to the captain then summoned the Almighty, praying, “May He who holds the winds in the hollow of His hand, and whose control the waters are subject, speed and prosper the *City of Owen Sound*.” That evening there was an excursion out on the bay on the palace steamer *Frances Smith*.



Mayor of Owen
Sound Thomas Scott

Over the next few weeks local carpenters put the finishing touches on the cabins and upper decks. Everything was painted, and furniture and fittings were brought aboard. On July 1, 1875 she made her maiden voyage to Meaford with a full load of excursionists.

By early July, sea trials were completed and the *City of Owen Sound* sailed for Chicago with a load of freight, arriving there on July 12, 1875.



Ship photos on the left top to bottom

Frances Smith, Cumberland, Campana. All sailed at one time with the Collingwood Lake Superior Line (or its subsequent name the Canada Lake Superior Line) along with *the City of Owen Sound.*

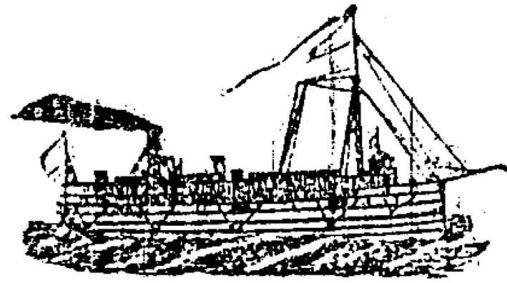
In 1875 the entrance to Owen Sound was dredged to accommodate the growing size of steamers entering the harbour.

Sketch by George Harlow White .

July 4, 1875



Collingwood Lake Superior Line



ROYAL MAIL STEAMERS.

—COMPOSED OF THE—

S. S. CAMPANA.....Capt. Anderson.
CITY OF OWEN SOUND.....Capt. McNabb.
FRANCES SMITH.....Capt. McGregor

ONE of the above first class steamers will leave Collingwood at 4 p. m., and Owen Sound at 11:30 p. m. every Monday and Thursday during the season of navigation.

For Manitoulin Island, Sault Ste. Marie, Thunder Bay, Duluth, Dakota and Manitoba.

after the arrival of the Steamboat Express trains of the Northern and Northwestern railways, and on the arrival of the Toronto, Grey & Bruce, arriving at this place on Mondays and Thursdays. For particulars as to freight and passenger rates apply to any agent of the above railways.

Harlow, Cumberland & Co.
General Traffic Agent 35, Toronto

Misfortune Begins

The Almighty was not kind to the new steamer. By October the same year she collided with the large schooner *Emma C. Hutchinson* at Chicago, losing her mast and pilothouse. This was the beginning of a number of serious misfortunes.

Little did anyone know what was in store.

On December 9, the *City of Owen Sound* joined the already crowded Owen Sound harbour for winter. She lay over with the *Okonra*, *W. Seymour*, *Silver Spray*, *Frances Smith*, *Waubuno*, *Prince Edward*, *Mountaineer*, *Phebe Catrine*, *Maple Leaf*, and the *Restless*.

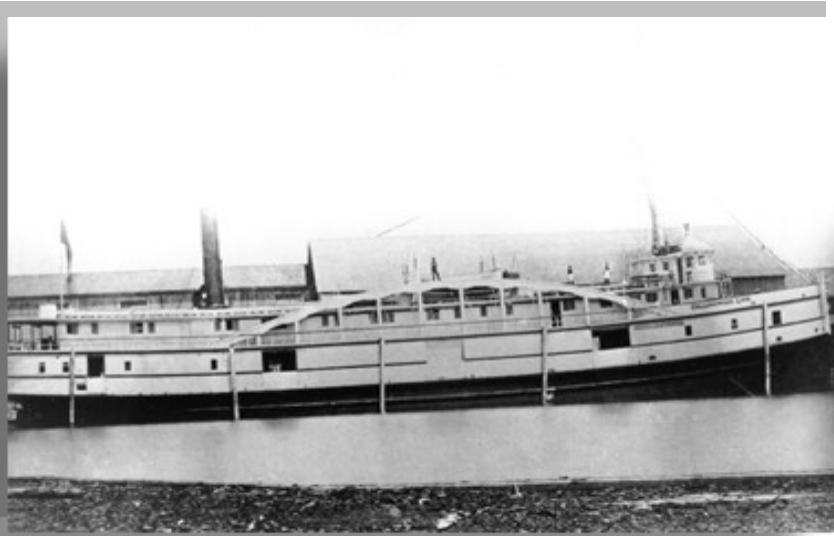
The 1876 season started quietly enough for the *City of Owen Sound*. The highlight in the early part of the year was an excursion of 500 people sponsored by the Masonic Lodge who left the dock at 9 a.m. on June 29 headed for McGregor harbour to the north. They disembarked there at about 1 p.m.; strolled, played games, and had a picnic lunch. By 5 p.m. they were on their way home. On board that evening they danced to the music of the 31st Battalion and a special quadrille band.

After a busy season the *City of Owen Sound* was the last vessel to arrive for winter lay up in Owen Sound on December 13, 1876.

Corporate changes over the winter brought the *City of Owen Sound* under the umbrella of the Collingwood Lake Superior Line which included the side wheel steamers *Frances Smith* and the *Cumberland*.



The *Emma C Hutchinson* collided with the *City of Owen Sound* and lost her mast and pilothouse



City of Winnipeg burned at the dock in Duluth in July 1881.

To prepare for the new participation in the Collingwood Lake Superior Line, modifications were made to upgrade and expand the passenger accommodation at Owen Sound in the winter of 1876-77. A new galley on the main deck was equipped to handle nearly 100

passengers. By adding passenger space two additional lifeboats had to be added on the top deck.

With fresh paint and more comfortable amenities the *City of Owen Sound* pushed out into Georgian Bay on May 3, 1877. She appeared to be a spanking new ship.

There was still ice near the shore and the schooner *Prince Edward*, also anxious to get a head start to the season, hooked on to the stern to be towed beyond the ice that still crowded the shore of Georgian Bay.



The Collingwood and Lake Superior Line did not have a good year in 1877. The *Cumberland* ran aground on a reef near Isle Royale the last week of July. The *Frances Smith* arrived and took the crew and passengers on board before returning them to shore. The *Cumberland* remained with bow high up on the rocks for a few weeks until she was declared a total wreck in August as she broke in two with her upper cabins gone and planking swept away. Only some furniture and freight was taken before the *Cumberland* slipped under the waves.

Even before the loss of the *Cumberland* the Collingwood Lake Superior Line purchased the *Annie L Craig* from the USA in 1878 to expand into the supply business on the upper lakes. The new ship was renamed the *City of Winnipeg*. Unfortunately the *City of Winnipeg* lasted only four years until it burned in Duluth in July 1881

On September 3, 1879 the *City of Owen Sound* was on a routine trip from Owen Sound to



Duluth. As she left Little Current on the way up she hit bottom heavily, but perceiving no problem proceeded to the Sault locks on the early morning of September 4. After locking upbound the captain became concerned about heavy northeast winds so he hid near Pointe aux Pins just a few miles beyond the locks until 6:50 p.m. As the barometer was rising in the afternoon, Captain McNabb decided to strike out into Whitefish Bay and proceed on his journey to Duluth. Just a few miles later near Round Island he struck ground again and had to be rescued by the tug *E.M. Peck*. It was apparent that the rudder had broken.

Pointe Aux Pins and the opening of Whitefish Bay
beyond



MARKS' WHARF,

Prince Arthur's Landing, Ont., Nov 14 1881

From **THOMAS MARKS & CO.**

To

THOMAS MARKS & BROTHER,

Mepphos Marks & Co

Importers, General Merchants & Forwarders.

The undermentioned Property consigned to you, has arrived this day, per Steamer *City of Owen Sound*
 Trip No. *16 UP*, subject to the following charges, which are payable on the delivery of goods.

STORAGE WILL BE CHARGED ON ALL GOODS NOT REMOVED WITHIN FORTY-EIGHT HOURS.

SHIPPER.	No. of Pkgs.	DESCRIPTION.	Weight.	Rate.	Back Charges.	Steamer's Charges.	Wharfage.	TOTAL.
	✓ 35	Boxes Raisins	1050					4 73
	✓ 10	Boxes & Apples						
	✓ 10	" Biscuits						
	✓ 5	Cps Wine						
	✓ 1	Box Glass	2880					9 36
	✓ 3	Boxes Syrup	1480					6 96
	✓ 144	Boxes Biscuits						
	✓ 4	Cps "						
	✓ 2	" Candies	2090					7 30
	✓ 2	Boxes Boston R.D						
	✓ 3	Perf. S. Rocher						

The above Bill of lading from November 14, 1881 shows that the *City of Owen Sound* was busy again after her October 16, 1881 mishap at Gore Bay. On this her 16th trip upbound to Prince Arthur's Landing she carried everything from raisins to furniture as well as axe handles and wine plus apples and biscuits.

Image courtesy Norm Playter.

The *E.M. Peck* then towed the vessel back to Owen Sound for another visit to the dry dock for repairs. By September 18, the *City of Owen Sound* was repaired and back in service.

Misfortune followed misfortune. On October 16, 1881 the *City of Owen Sound* was running under full power just off the coast of Manitoulin Island near Gore Bay when she struck a rock. Downbound from the west with a load of an estimated 30,000 bu. of grain she could not get off the rock. Under the captain's orders the crew

threw 4000 bushels overboard: to no avail. The ship remained stranded high and dry. As it happened, the steamer *Manitoulin* was passing by and stopped after hearing distress signals. When she unloaded an additional 6000 bushels into her hold she then fastened a hawser to the stern of the *City of Owen Sound* and tried to pull the unfortunate vessel off.

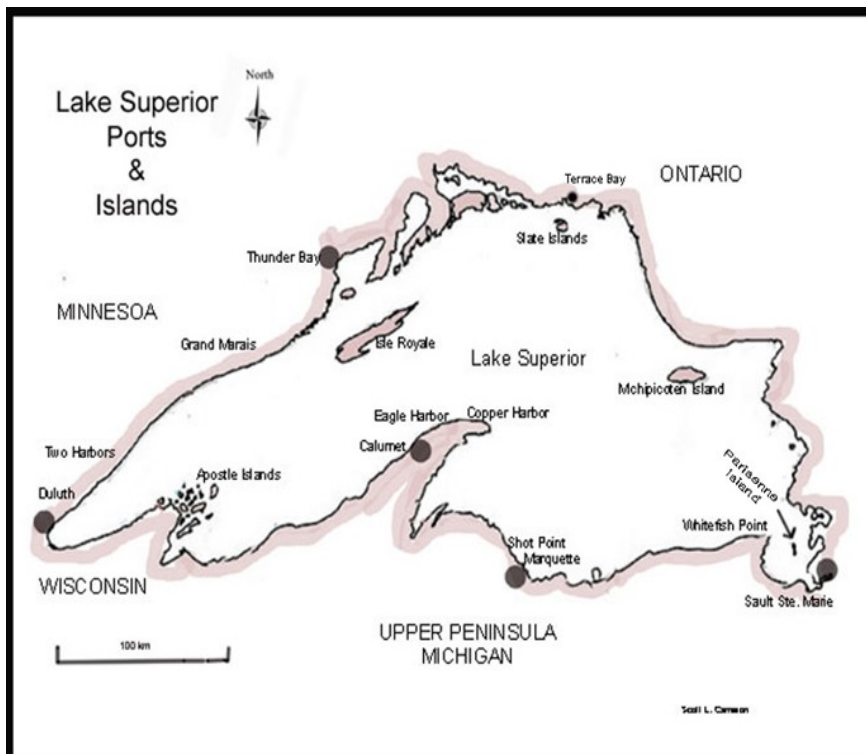
No luck!



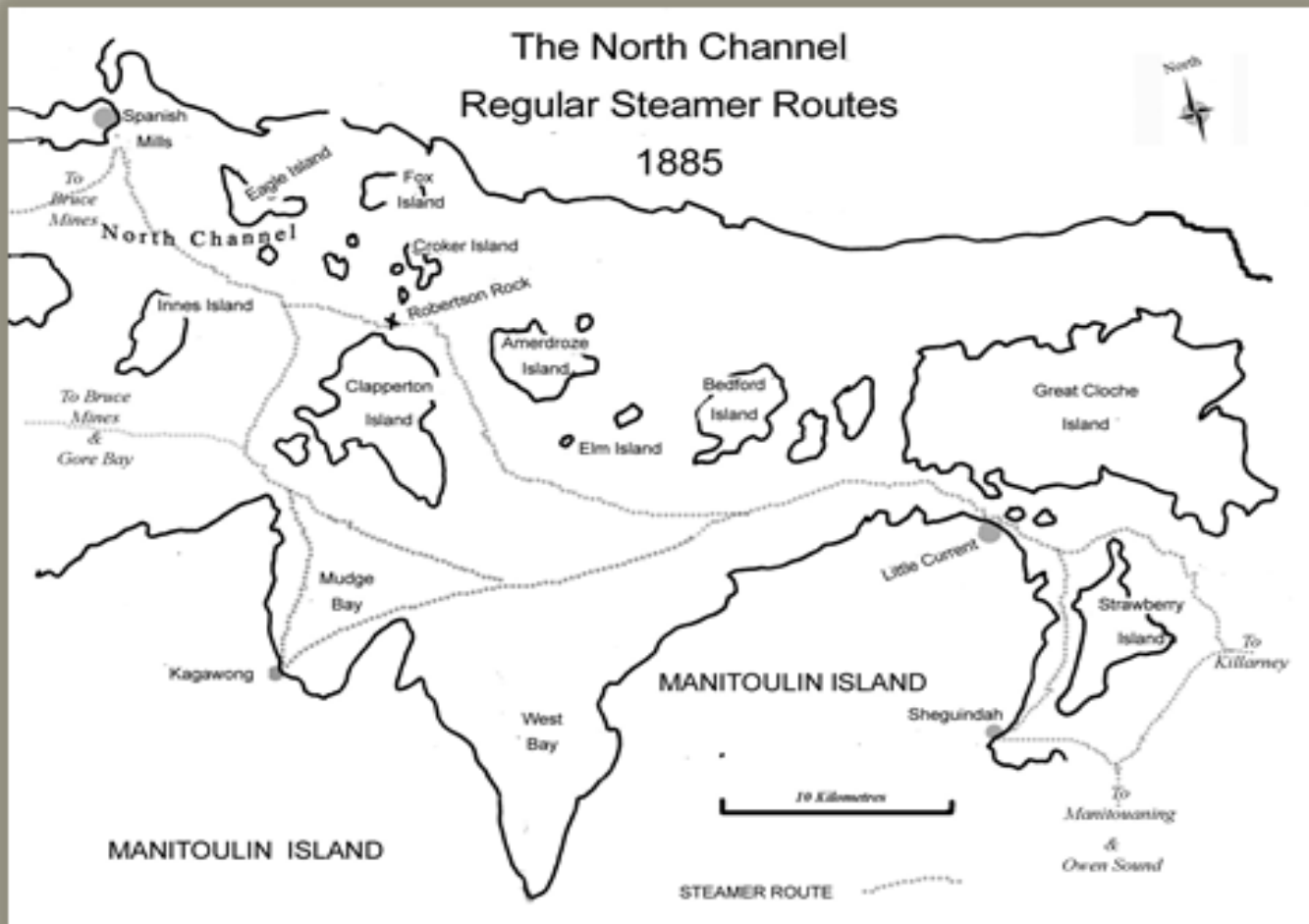
A second attempt the next day was successful after an additional 2000 bushels were tossed overboard. On inspection the rudder appeared to be jammed. With difficulty the *Manitoulin* towed the luckless and unsteerable *City of Owen Sound* into Gore Bay where minor repairs succeeded in getting the ship fixed well enough continue her journey on October 21 without further mishap. The only lucky thing was that the rescue was made just before heavy seas and gale force winds could have ended the life of the *City of Owen Sound* in an October 22 storm.

In 1883 the *City of Owen Sound* was back in dry dock at Collingwood for a major

overhaul. Her internal structure was strengthened and the old wood fired boiler was converted to a coal fired one. With fresh paint and a reorganized main deck she left Collingwood at night on May 1, 1884 heading for Owen Sound. Unfortunately a hatch had been left open and a man fell to his death on the cargo deck below.



Further difficulties occurred on May 13 on the way to Mark's Dock in Prince Arthur's Landing. The *City of Owen Sound* became trapped in an icefield for two days. The lack of power in the old engines was not enough to extricate her so several teams of horses with sleighs were sent out to off load part of the cargo before the ship reached her destination.



The North Channel today is a sailor's paradise. In the 19th century it was a dangerous and torturous passage from Georgian Bay to the Sault. The *City of Owen Sound* sank at Robertson Rock. Her crew abandoned ship.

According to the *Owen Sound Advertiser* another death occurred in October the same year when Arthur Lowe, a porter from Owen Sound was swept overboard during rough weather. A lifeboat was lowered but Lowe was not found.

The City of Owen Sound Sinks

The *City of Owen Sound* made multiple trips to Michipicoten in 1884 carrying supplies for the construction of the CPR. The community was out of control where whisky and prostitution were rampant in the hands of the Wallace Gang. The crew was accused of openly selling whisky to the Natives there despite a ban on the sale of alcohol. The crew also had a reputation as being a tough bunch.

As the 1884 season closed, the former mate in 1883 and now captain, Neil Campbell left Owen Sound for that one last trip on November 12. The ship was heavily loaded as was the norm for the “last trip of the season”. After passing through the locks at the Sault, he pointed his ship toward the north shore of Lake Superior. As he approached Michipicoten the ship was driven ashore by heavy winds. Passengers and crew were taken off, but the ship was scuttled and abandoned. Fortunately she settled in a protected area and was not damaged by the pressures of ice jams.

Salvage operations began the next year in June 1885. The ship was raised and towed back to Owen Sound where she was once again in dry dock. There were serious damages internally. The damages were severe enough that it took several months to decide to repair her or salvage her. The internal frames were broken, the ship was hogged (bent out of shape) on the port side, the deck beams were lifted and much of the deck planking was destroyed. The cost of repair was estimated at over \$17,000.

Toward the end of the summer it was decided that the *City of Owen Sound* was still worthy of a return to her sailing career so repairs were begun. By December 7 she was back in the water ready for the sailing season of 1886. Once again she was one of the first ships out of the harbour on April 28, 1886.

1886 was an uneventful year.



In 1883 Collingwood opened her new dry dock. This created serious competition for dry dock space with the Owen Sound dry docks. Competition between the two communities was fierce and overflowed into the local newspapers. From 1886 the steamer *City of Owen Sound* used the new facilities in Collingwood.

The City of Owen Sound Sinks Again

The *City of Owen Sound* sailed from Duluth on October 19, 1887, and faced very heavy seas all the way down Lake Superior. On arrival at Sault Ste. Marie, her new master, Captain Francis Xavier LaFrance, waited for the weather to clear. The *City of Owen Sound* left Sault Ste. Marie on October 23, 1887 during a gale accompanied by heavy rains and



The tug *Emma Munson* assisted in raising the *City of Owen Sound* but was sunk later in a storm in 1882

snow squalls. There were no passengers aboard. Stored below were 27,000 bushels of grain and several hundred barrels of fish. The route downbound to Little Current on the north side of Manitoulin Island was reasonably

sheltered, but on that night there seemed to be no escape from the heavy weather, snow squalls, and a strong running current. The *City of Owen Sound* struggled all night against high seas and near zero visibility. The “Turkey Trail” through the North Channel in those days was not well marked. The twists and turns of the channel were a place for only the most experienced navigators. The trail was tricky business even in daylight conditions.

The Accident

On the night of the accident, a lookout clad in oilskins and sou'wester stood on the foredeck acting as the eyes of the captain. The wheelsman inside the pilothouse followed orders relayed from the captain or first mate standing outside in the full face of the weather. Visibility was very bad as snow streamers blew over the bow, obscuring the nearby island shorelines through which the captain was attempting to thread his vessel. At 4 a.m. the *City of Owen Sound* struck Robertson Rock just north of Clapperton Island, tearing a huge hole in the hull. Water poured into the boat, dousing the boilers and forcing a list. Within a half hour, Captain Xavier La France ordered his crew to abandon ship.



The *City of Owen Sound* being rebuilt in 1892 after 3 years on the bottom.

In two lifeboats they made their way safely to the island. They had only the clothes on their backs. Shortly after they escaped, the vessel slid into eight fathoms (100 feet) of water, an apparent total loss. Her superstructure floated away, as did much of the rigging. The remains of her upper decks and superstructure were spread around the coves and the northern shoreline of Manitoulin Island over the following year.

The entire crew was picked up later in the day and taken to Collingwood by the steamer *Campana*. Captain La France proclaimed the *City of Owen Sound* a total wreck, believing that the hole in her hull was beyond repair and that the broken ship was too deep to recover.

The City of Owen Sound sat on the bottom for three years. Fish swam in and out of her broken hull, feasting on the grain stored deep in the hold. Everyone assumed the *City of Owen Sound* was gone forever.

In the spring of 1891, a salvage company from Kingston decided to use a new technology it had invented to raise the vessel off the bottom.

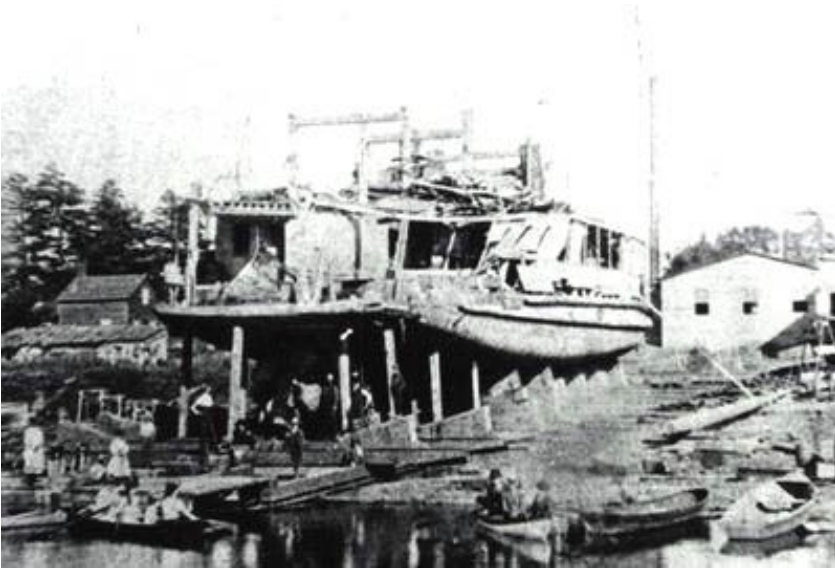


The *City of Owen Sound* now called the *Saturn* hauled lumber until 1901.

What the company had invented was a compartmentalized pontoon that could be pressurized below water, providing lift when filled with air. By sinking these pontoons along each side of the hull and linking them with chains, then pumping air into the compart-

ments, it was calculated that each pontoon could lift over 100 tons. Hardhat divers would descend the eight fathoms (33 metres) to couple the huge iron tubes and secure the submerged vessel to the pontoons.

The salvage company owner, Captain William Leslie, had been successful, using this method in



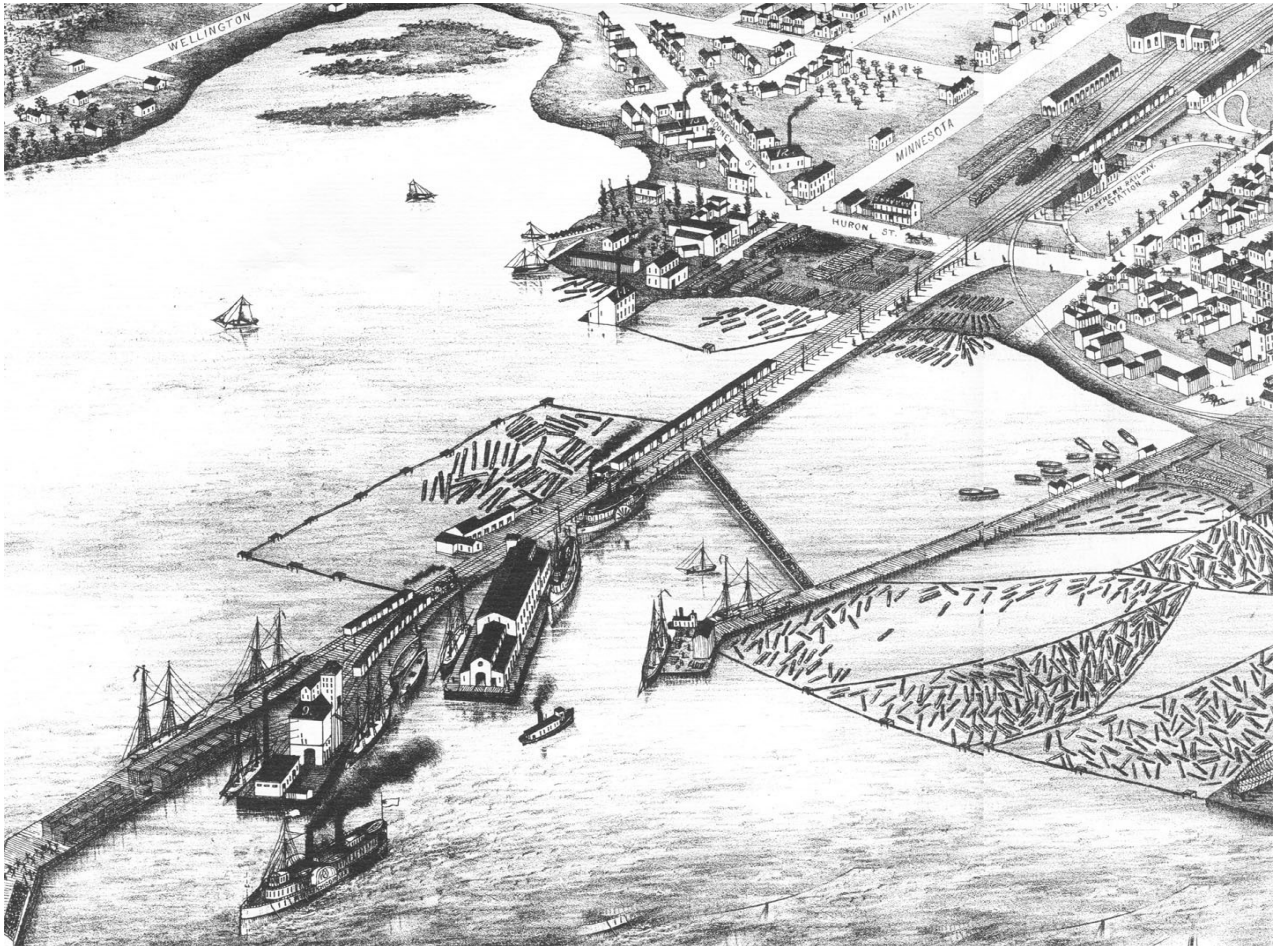
The Car (Railway Car) Ferry William Armstrong sank in lake Ontario in 1889. It was raised by Captain William Leslie

raising the (railway) car ferry

William Armstrong from seven

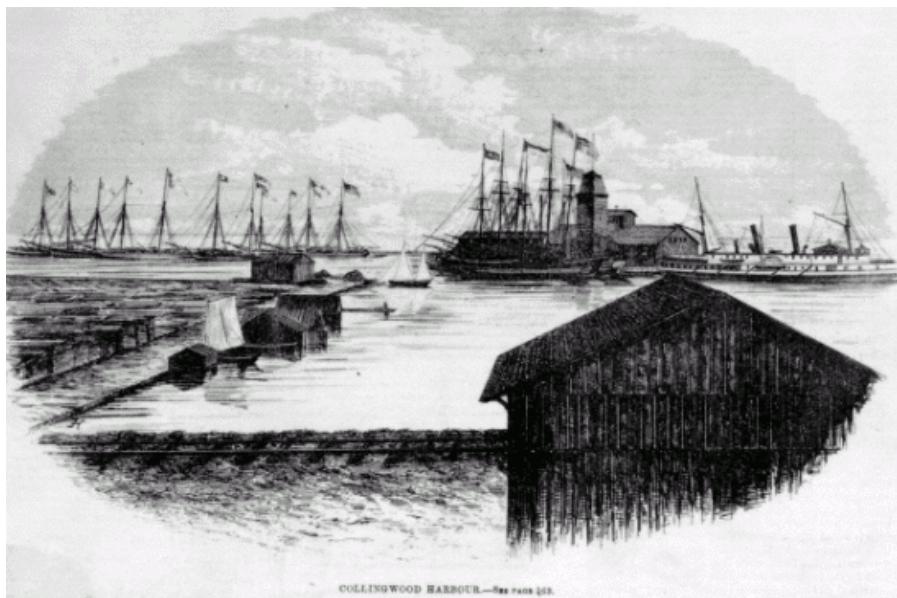
fathoms near Brockville on Lake Ontario in 1889. The process was exceedingly dangerous, and had resulted in the sinking of the barge *Robert Gaskin* when a pressurized pontoon broke loose underwater and shot to the surface like a torpedo, striking the *Gaskin* amidships and sinking her. However, Captain Leslie was sure it would work without incident on the *City of Owen Sound*.

The tug *Emma Munson* left Kingston in mid July 1891 with two large 46 foot pontoons in tow. She made her way through the lakes to the wreck site raising the interest of those on shore about the strange things trailing the tug. Early attempts at raising the wreck were unsuccessful, but eventually the waterlogged *City of Owen Sound* finally broke the surface of the North Channel. Several weeks of pumping and basic hull repairs followed. Then she was towed to Little Current where she remained over the winter of 1891. Meanwhile the *Emma Munson* herself sank during a gale and had to be raised by the same pontoons. That done, she was towed to Collingwood, repaired and returned to pick up the *City of Owen Sound* at Little Current to bring her to Collingwood.



Above : Collingwood harbour 1870. The Northern Railway (aka Huron, Simcoe and Ontario RR) also nicknamed as Hay, Straw, and Oats RR had tracks directly onto the pier. The ship in the forefront is the *Chicora*. Cordwood stacked on the dock was to supply wood burning steamers. The log booms were filled with logs to be turned into lumber and shipped to the United States.

Below: Collingwood harbour (1870 filled with schooners. Log booms on the left. The paddle wheel steamer the *Chicora*



COLLINGWOOD HARBOUR.—See page 128.

Up From the Bottom to Sail Again

After three years on the bottom the grain was putrid. Cleaning the hull was a major job requiring pressure hoses. The Collingwood fire department was not ready to participate so private investment was required. Eventually the mess was cleaned up and repairs could begin. The repairs were not to restore the old *City of Owen Sound* but to make a new purposed vessel for carrying lumber. Large ports were opened on the sides and the main deck was cabinless but protected by a four foot rail. Only the hogging arch previously installed to tighten up the flexibility of the ship in heavy seas was exposed. She was renamed the *Saturn*.

The full rebuilding job was completed by late 1892. Misfortune followed when the *Saturn* went aground again on her first trip in late November while leaving Parry Sound with a full load of lumber. Over 80,000 feet had to be lightered before she could be pulled off Black Rock where she struck.

It was not until November 5, 1895 that another mishap occurred. As was the custom, steam driven freighters often pulled schooners and barges long distances. On this occasion the *City of Owen Sound* had the schooner *J. G. Worts* in tow, hauling grain from Fort William to Midland at the foot to Georgian Bay. In the open waters of Lake Huron large waves and a southwest gale forced the captain to attempt to sneak under the protection of Cove Island Strait via what he thought was a more sheltered route via the Cape Hurd Channel. The water is shallow there and there is little room for error. The captain made an error. The *Saturn* (aka *City of Owen Sound*) was again grounded on a shoal not far from Devil's Island. Both the schooner's crew and the steamer's crew abandoned ship and made their way to Tobermory while the two ships settled to the bottom.



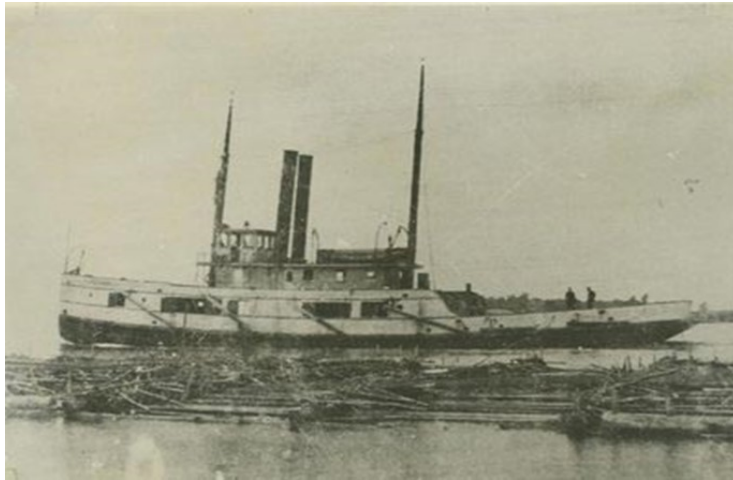


The schooner *J.G. Worts* sank off the coast of the Bruce Peninsula in 1895. The entire crew managed to get to safety

A tragic side of the story involved a well-known Tobermory light house keeper, skiff, planning to go to the wreck scene and possibly gather something of value. Abraham Davis. Davis left home at 10 p.m. Wednesday, November 11. He never made it home and his body was never found. Local stories suggest that there may have been foul play in his disappearance.

Never to let a good ship rest in the water several attempts were made to extract the two vessels from the shoals.

Once again Captain Leslie from Kingston arrived on the scene with his new tug *Petrel* and the schooner *Sylvester Neelon*. After several hours of lightering the soggy cargo of grain the *City*



Tug *Petrel* managed to raise the sunken *City of Owen Sound* from the bottom after it sank in November 1895

of Owen Sound rose again. Leslie then went to work on the *Worts* but the vessel became seriously damaged in a storm and then sank to the bottom with her cargo of 22,000 bu of grain. The *City of Owen Sound* was towed to Collingwood where the ruined cargo was sold at auction.

The load of grain had swollen to such an extent that a new deck was installed and some of the hull planking had to be replaced. The repurposed vessel emerged in the spring of 1898 with quite a different appearance and a brand new name. She was now known as the *Saturn*. Under the master Alex Anderson the *Saturn* hauled lumber successfully for three years from the head of the lakes to Collins Bay at the eastern end of Lake Ontario.

On September 17, 1901 carrying a load of coal, the *Saturn*, leaking and unmanageable, sank north of Southampton Ontario. The old *City of Owen Sound* was finally on the bottom to stay.

The ten person crew including Captain Manson and the female cook,

managed to abandon the sinking ship. For over seven hours they rowed through rolling surf amplified by the shallow water on this coast of Lake Huron. They touched shore at the north corner of Sauble Beach. Finally they walked to safety to the town of Southampton.

The unfortunate *S. S. City of Owen Sound* was finally in her resting place in 1901.

Summary of Misadventures

Year	Month	Date	Comment
1875	June	25	Launch of the <i>City of Owen Sound</i> . Problem with <i>Belle McPhee</i> launch
1875	Oct		Collision with <i>Emma C Hutchinson</i> in Chicago. Wrecked pilothouse
1879	Sept	3	Hits bottom near Little Current
1879	Sept	4	Hits rock at Round Island - towed to OS by Sept 19
1881	Oct	16	Hits rock at Gore Bay - stranded & pulled off
1883	winter		Major repairs to strengthen frames
1884	May	1	Man falls to his death into a hold
1884	May	13	Trapped in Lake Superior ice
1884	Oct		Arthur Lowe a porter overboard in a storm
1884	Nov	12	Scuttled for the winter at Michipicoten after being driven ashore
1887	Oct	23	Hits Robertson Rock - sinks - on bottom for 3 years. Considered a total wreck
1891	winter		Major repairs at Collingwood
1892	Nov	5	Aground at Parry Sound –lumber lightered
1895	Nov	5	Sinks at Cape Hurd near Cove Island. <i>J.G. Worts</i> a total loss
1901	Sept	17	Sinks near Southampton, ON

Selected Sources

Community Waterfront Heritage Centre, Owen Sound

Collingwood Museum

Grey Roots Museum

Owen Sound Advertiser

Meaford Monitor

Buffalo Commercial Advertiser

Great Lakes Maritime Collection , Alpena MI

Manitoulin Expositor

The Frances Smith by Scott L. Cameron

The Scanner, Toronto Marine Historical Society

Maritime History of the Great Lakes

Toronto Public Library

Historian Ron Beaupre

Norm Playter



The silver water service above was presented to the builder, John Simpson in 1875 on the occasion of the launching of the *City of Owen Sound*.

The silver service is on display at the **Community Waterfront Heritage Centre** in Owen Sound.

