

HIBOU

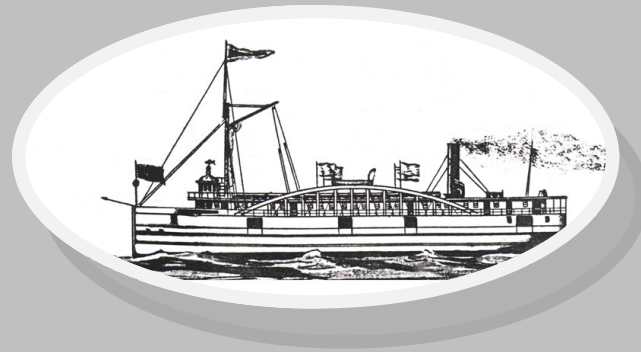
Last Trip of the Season
Saturday, November 21, 1936



“A Wreck Strewn Shore Tells of a Grim Tragedy”

STEAMBOAT STORIES

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



The Sinking of the *Hibou*

THE SETTING FOR A TRAGEDY

On November 21, 1936 the 121.8 foot freight and passenger steamer *Hibou* sank just a few kilometers NNE of the port of Owen Sound. Seven members of her crew of seventeen went down with her. Two of those bodies were never recovered. Unlike most disasters on the lakes in late November there was, at the time, little wind, relatively calm seas, and above freezing temperatures. There were a few snow flurries at 4:16 a.m. when they left the dock at Owen Sound. Weather played almost no part in the tragedy. There was an approaching weather front from the west predicting strong winds NNW and snow in the forecast, but dirty weather did not arrive until late Sunday November 22. *Hibou* sank in the calm of an early Saturday morning. The loss stunned the community and was front page news in all the provincial newspapers.

What happened is not so much conjecture as piecing together the reports of the survivors, knowing something about the construction of the *Hibou*, analyzing the loading configuration, recognizing that



MV Hibou at Owen Sound 1936

there was a breakdown of communication, and a failure of the ship's officers to carefully evaluate the of physics of buoyancy and gravity.

THE *Hibou* IS BORN as the *Alice*

W

hen the *Alice* was launched back in October 1907 at the Bertram Engine Works in Toronto, the vessel was one of several ships built at the shipyards there. The Bertram Works had a reputation for building luxury ships like the floating palace *Montreal* with 260 staterooms and 20 opulent parlour rooms. The *Alice* was not at all like that. She was a workhorse tug ordered by the Agricultural Department of the Canadian government to serve as a quarantine vessel on the St. Lawrence River at Quebec. The ship's hull was made of steel and she was powered by a coal fired steam engine. The twin screw propulsion was an advantage in turning in close quarters. One propeller could be powered forward while the other powered in reverse thereby arcing a very tight circle.



Hibou as a workhorse tug
(postcard)

Not much is known about the early operations of the *Alice*, except that in 1915 the ship was pressed into service for a decade hauling freight and passengers between Quebec and Grosse Isle New York.

John Tackaberry Sr. of Lion's Head bought the *Alice* in 1926 and contracted the Midland Shipyards, in



James Playfair of Midland had major ship building facilities

Ontario, owned by an immigrant Scottish shipbuilder, James Playfair, to make significant changes in the design of the ship. Playfair had a huge operation in Midland, building a number of vessels for Canada Steamship Lines and the Great Lakes Transportation Company. Modifications to the *Alice* were relatively simple compared to the complexities of building large freighters designed for bulk transport. However the modifications were significant.

Steel plating was extended to enclose another deck so that more space could be made for cargo and storage on the 'tween deck. To accommodate passengers an additional deck above, a cabin deck for staterooms and a smoking parlour, were added. New quarters for the officers were added forward. The wheelhouse was steel. The modifications completely transformed the profile of the former *Alice*.

At Midland two diesel engines were installed to replace the coal fired engines. Steam winches continued to be powered by a previously installed coal fired donkey boiler. Steam power was used to

raise and lower freight on an elevator between the main deck and the new 'tween deck. The small donkey boiler also provided steam for the ship's whistle that was located on an extended funnel. When the reconstruction work was completed, in the spring of 1927 inspectors gave the vessel a passing grade although there is no record of a stability test.

Tackaberry initiated a service between Manitoulin Island and Bruce Peninsula ports, ferrying freight and passengers over the summer and fall. Cargo included everything from apples to plow shares, kerosene to flour. In fact the *Alice* supplied the essentials for everyday living to an out of the way corner of Ontario.

In the spring of 1928 a subsidiary of the Booth Fisheries Company of Canada, The Dominion Transportation Company (DTC) purchased the vessel from Tackaberry. The Dominion Transportation Company had been operating as a subsidiary of the Booth Fisheries Company of Canada since 1901. The Booth Fisheries Company of Canada in turn was a subsidiary of a much larger company, the Booth Fisheries Company of Chicago.



Dominion Transportation Co. had operations in Wiarton since 1901

After the purchase from Tackaberry in 1928, modifications again were made at the shipyards in Kingston. The portholes in the cabin deck were replaced with windows and the state rooms were removed to make way for a dance hall.

The Canadian arm of Booth Fisheries operated the ship under the service and control of Dominion Transportation managed by Mr. R. V. Malloy. Their office was located in Owen Sound. In 1936 additional minor changes were made at Owen Sound in the cabin design. After these minor modifications the *Alice* was positioned in Owen Sound where a government inspector, J. K. Venables gave the approval for another year of service. The *Alice*, was renamed the *Hibou*.

She ran a passenger and package freight service out of that port to communities of the North Channel and Manitoulin Island. The name change was simply to conform to the names of Dominion's other two ships, the *Caribou* and the *Manitou*.

The *Caribou* and *Manitou* were wooden sister ships making weekly service out of Owen Sound to small ports along the route to Sault Ste. Marie and beyond as far as Michipicoten in Lake Superior. They made regular calls at Killarney, Manitowaning, Little Current, Kagawong, Gore Bay, Meldrum Bay, Cockburn Island, Thessalon, Bruce Mines, Hilton Beach, Sault Ste. Marie, and Quebec Harbour at Michipicoten Island. There were occasional visits to the fishing community Gargantua further north.



The *Caribou* ran a regular route from Owen Sound to Lake Superior. She stopped at a dozen small communities in the North Channel. On the trip north the *Caribou* carried everything from butter to hardware tools and furniture as well as cattle.



The wooden *Manitou* heads north into Lake Superior from the Soo Locks to visit Michipicoten to pick up fish for markets on her return to Owen Sound as far away as New York.

ORGANIZING FOR PROFIT

The main competitor and rival for the Dominion Transportation Company was the Owen Sound Transportation Company, (OSTC) formed in 1921 by three Owen Sound businessmen from the North American Bent Chair Company. Captain Norman McKay a highly regarded mariner was appointed General Manager. His pedigree in sailing was deep. His father and four of his brothers were



Captain Norman McKay was a highly respected master mariner from a family of mariners

master mariners.

Alongside the OSTC's growing fleet of ships, Dominion's *Caribou* and *Manitou* traced and retraced their routes almost port for port. The companies competed for freight as well as a growing interest in "luxury" five day cruises including the annual fall hunting cruise for deer hunters.

To end the service duplication and cost inefficacy of the rivalry between the Owen Sound Transportation Service and the Dominion Transportation Company, an agreement to set up a "pooled service" was initiated in 1936. Basically the pooled service was a non-compete arrangement with ship schedules designed not to overlap service. That way rivalry could end. Efficiency would prevail. Profits could

be shared. But, separate corporate

identities were maintained. *Hibou* remained officially under the ownership of Booth Fisheries of Canada.

Captain McKay and Mr. Malloy, joint managers of the pooled service, operated out of same office in Owen Sound.



In 1937 The *Hibou* carried cars and small trucks from Tobermory to South Baymouth. The starboard doors are open to drive cars on board

THE *Hibou* GOES TO WORK IN GEORGIAN BAY

James Agnew (39) of Kilsyth was appointed Master of the *Hibou* on June 12, 1936. He had been sailing for 16 years. This was his first appointment as Captain. His First Mate was an Owen Sounder, Howard Allan (34). Allan sailed on and off for 12 years. He became Agnew's mate in mid-August. Under their command, the vessel sailed the ferry route from Tobermory to South Baymouth in



The *Normac* got her name from Captain Norman McKay, one of the principals, and General Manager of the Owen Sound Transportation Company

the summer of 1936. The ship carried automobiles, the occasional truck, and passengers in the twice a day service with complemented service by the OSTC's *Normac*. *Hibou* made two round trips daily until November 16, 1936.

As a ferry, there was a problem loading and unloading automobiles at both ends of the run because the car deck of *Hibou* was so high. To compensate for that, *Hibou* carried full loads of water ballast in three tanks located under the cargo hold; the fore peak tank, after tank, and mid ship tank. With all tanks filled, this represented about 80 tons of ballast thereby lowering the ship in the water at the dock for loading and unloading. Water could be pumped out as needed but over the summer season all tanks remained full.

Car ferry traffic petered out by mid-October but there was enough business to keep the *Hibou* in service until November 16. When the *Hibou* returned to home port, Owen Sound, Captain Norman McKay took over as skipper. Captain Agnew became his First Mate and Mate Allen became Second Mate.

At Owen Sound The ship was loaded with supplies for Collins Inlet and Killarney. It was a relatively light load of 85 tons of hay and about 5 tons of package freight. This was Agnew's first experience loading the *Hibou* with freight as he had only loaded cars before.



Collins Inlet today is a ghost town but in the early 20th century it produced lumber for the US market

At 6:30 p.m. November 17, *Hibou* under the command of Captain McKay, sailed out into the Owen Sound for an hour or so, made a few turns, and then returned to the dock in light snow, departing for Killarney and Collins Inlet the next day, November 18 at noon.

On *Hibou's* return to Owen Sound, on November 20, First Mate Agnew noted that the ship listed in turns and the wind but always straightened up after the turn was completed. He said this was no problem but did admit the ship was "cranky". The ship stopped at Meaford on the way back to pick up 250 barrels of apples and 10 tons of hay. The hay was loaded on the 'tween deck. This last leg of the trip between Meaford and Owen Sound was uneventful.

At Owen Sound the barrels of apples were off loaded to the *Normac* (one of OSTC's vessels still sailing in November). The crew began immediately to load the *Hibou* for a return trip to Killarney, Collins Bay, Manitowaning, and South Baymouth.

North Channel Cruises

**UP WHERE IT'S
ALWAYS COOL**
-and there's no hay fever

S.S. MANITOULIN—3-day Cruise to Mackinac Island—leave Owen Sound Mondays—10 p.m. E.S.T. up along the North Shore of Manitoulin to Sault Ste. Marie and on to Mackinac Island, returning Saturdays in time for morning bus or train.
Dancing — Games

S.S. CARIBOU and S.S. MANITOU—6-day Cruise to Michipicoten in Lake Superior—leave Owen Sound Tuesdays, 10 p.m. E.S.T. by the same thrillingly beautiful route to the Sault and Michipicoten, returning Monday morning in time for bus or train; or leaving Fridays, returning Thursdays (same times).
Excellent meals and berths on all ships.



WEEK-END CRUISE—meals and berths included
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Saturdays—10 p.m. E.S.T. to Monday morning in time for bus or train—see Killarney, Little Current, Tobermory and the famous Flower Pot Island.

\$35 MEALS AND BERTH INCLUDED

For reservations, see your local travel agent or write or wire us.

DOMINION TRANSPORTATION CO. LTD.
OWEN SOUND TRANSPORTATION CO. LTD.
OWEN SOUND

M.S. NORMAC } Ferry from Tobermory to South Bay, Manitoulin—save time
M.S. HIBOU } and money when going to Manitoulin and the North Shore.

LOADING FOR THE LAST VOYAGE

The baled hay loaded earlier in the day at Meaford remained on the 'tween deck". It weighed about 10 tons. Agnew ordered his crew to begin filling the hold with freight. While this was going on, Captain McKay, came to him and said "There's no use to start at the back (of the hold) and because you will not be able to fill that side anyway." At the time 400 bags of flour representing 20 tons had already been stowed. It was packed into the hold to the full height of the deck (9'10").

In all, the crew and some extra labour enlisted at dockside loaded 800 bags of flour and feed. They used wheel barrow like hand trucks, from the company's dockside freight shed. Each truck could transport several large 100 pound bags. The bags were placed on a pallet, then lowered into the hold on an elevator where additional men unloaded the pallet and built narrow flour/feed bag pile stacked into interlocking layers, just like the construction of a thick brick wall. This wall was located portside directly forward of the coal bunker (for the donkey boiler) which carried an estimated 7 tons of coal, also on the port side. Normally there would have been 50 tons of coal in this port side bunker, but at the end of the season there was no need to carry that much to power the winches and blow the whistle. Had the bunker been full, it would have lowered the ship in the water, thereby lowering the centre of gravity.

On the starboard side there was a diesel fuel tank containing about 3000 gallons of fuel oil representing 14 tons and another pile of flour and feed bags amassed in a 16' square. Mate Agnew ordered that miscellaneous cargo including 2 tons of coal in bags and 12 tons of freight (eggs, butter, etc.) belonging to National Grocers be stowed starboard. In total there was an estimated 54 tons of freight in the hold.

To keep the vessel trim, a space was left on the starboard side. It is clear that if the coal bunker had been full, up to 50 tons more freight could have been stowed on the lower deck, starboard side.



Loading package freight with hand wheeled "trucks" aboard a Great Lakes passenger vessel.

Her cargo manifest read as follows;

| | |
|---|----------|
| flour and feed | 127 tons |
| oil and gasoline in drums | 7 tons |
| hay in bales | 10 tons |
| cased canned goods | 3 tons |
| bagged sugar | 7 tons |
| bagged potatoes | 3 tons |
| apples in barrels | 2 tons |
| soft drinks | 2 tons |
| bagged coal | 2 tons |
| molasses in drums | 1 ton |
| tubs and cases of lard | 5 tons |
| currants, raisins, prunes, figs, dates and starch | 3 tons |
| crated cabbages | 1 ton |
| other assorted package freight | 21 tons |

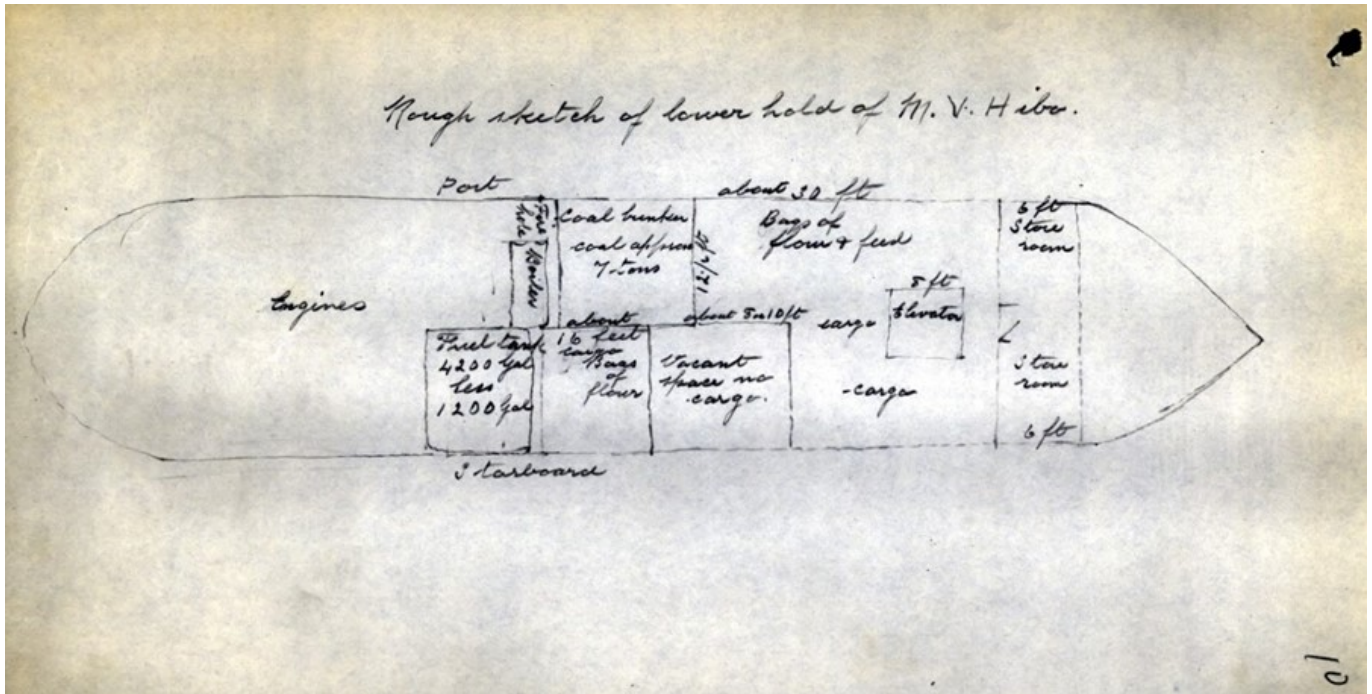
The total weight was 194 tons, the largest freight load ever carried by *Hibou* in Dominion's service. Of this total, 104 ½ tons were stowed on the 'tween deck (above the water level) while 89 ½ tons were placed on the main deck in the lower hold, this being primarily in the area forward of the engine room and aft of the elevator apparatus.

Before leaving the ship for a rest at home the evening of November 20, Captain McKay ordered First Mate Agnew to pump the water from the midship ballast tank and the forepeak ballast tank while leaving the remaining stern ballast tank full. The First Mate passed the order along to the Chief Engineer Murdoch McIvor who it appeared later, he misunderstood. He pumped all three ballast tanks. To insure that all was ship shape all port holes were closed (except the one in the head). Under the direction of the wheelsman, Ross Galbraith the gangway was secured, the doors caulked, and chocks positioned around the frame of the doors.

“The gangway was a 7 foot square closed with four doors, two in the bottom half which closed first, with a flange overlaying in the centre and along the bottom and made fast with bolts in the bottom. The upper two doors closed with a flange overlapping the lower doors and bolts binding the upper and lower doors together.”

There were two similar doors on the port side. They were likewise secured. “...but there was no gangway aft on the starboard side. There was only a wooden shutter...”.

When open, this 5' x 4' opening was fastened to the ceiling with a metal hook. When closed it swung down to a set of side flanges, resting level with the floor. The door was held in position with a steel bar resting on a pair of side cleats.



Rough sketch of the lower hold of the M.V. HIBOU. Below this lower hold were 3 ballast tanks. The lower hold was below the water line and accessed by an elevator located forward.

The engines were at the stern

Loading was completed about 3:30 a.m. The ship was, determined by Mate Agnew, ready to sail. Wilber Barnard, the OSTC accountant from the shore office drove up to Capt. McKay's home where the skipper was resting, picked him up, and delivered him to the ship. On their arrival, McKay and Barnard walked down the pier beside *Hibou* and noted that she was drawing 10'4" forward and about 12'6" aft. McKay noted mistakenly to Barnard that there was still ballast water in the after tank.

CASTING OFF FOR A FATEFUL TRIP

Satisfied all was in order McKay signaled his crew to cast off. With McKay in charge, the Second Mate at the wheel, and the First Mate using a search light to spot stakes that marked the channel, *Hibou* began her fateful trip.

Owen Sound had 2 range lights to guide vessels into the inner harbour. About 4:16 a.m. the *Hibou* cleared the front range light. Moving at about 4 mph, they passed the outer harbour stake located about a quarter of a mile outside the harbour.

“These astern, he (McKay) sent Agnew below to pick up a new bulb to replace the one in the binnacle lamp which had just burned out. McKay then went out on the bridge (there were no windows in the after end of the pilothouse) and stood looking aft at the ranges, all the while advising Allan of the courses he wanted to try in testing the compass. He finally settled on North 7/8 East as the best heading to use when leaving the harbour.”

“Stop the port engine,” ordered the Captain.

“Starboard a little,” he instructed.

Hibou ran on that new course for 2-3 minutes with a slight list to starboard until he ordered, “Hard a port.” The maneuver was designed to swing the ship around to check the deviation of a new compass that just had been installed. McKay wanted to make sure everything was in good working order before setting out onto the bay.

As *Hibou* began the turn she listed further to starboard. When she did not recover quickly (as a “stiff” ship would – *Hibou* was “cranky”), the Captain ordered “Hard a starboard.” There was no response and the ship continued to list further and further on to her starboard side. McKay remarked, “Look at that boat swing, She is sure answering her rudder tonight. It usually takes about ten acres to swing around.”

He commanded Mate Allan, “Midship your Wheel”.

“Put a little starboard on her,” Captain McKay said after a few moments.

When the ship continued to list he ordered, “Midship again.”

“It looks like she is not going to come out of it,” said McKay.

At that point the wheel spun out of Allan’s hands. “I have lost control of the wheel, I can’t stand up” said Allen as his feet slipped on the now sloping floor of the pilot house.

“Get out of the wheel house,” ordered McKay.

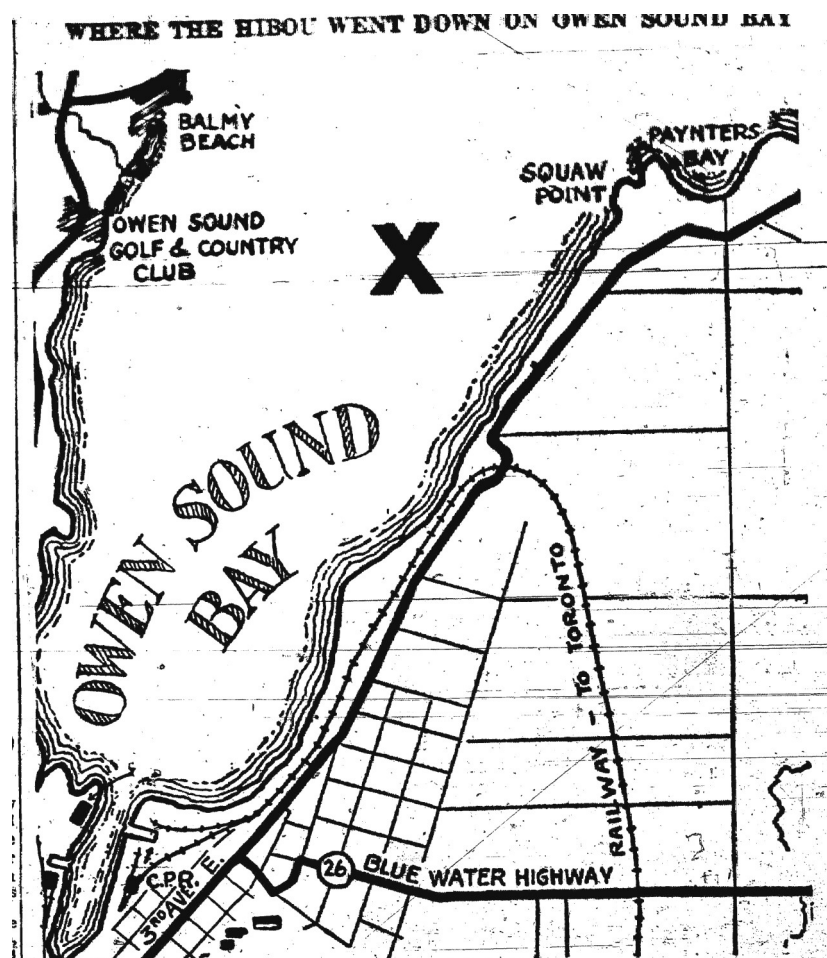
“Is she going to sink,” replied Allan.

“Certainly,” said McKay. “Call everybody, and I mean everybody!”

The safety of the crew became McKay’s new concern.

While this was going on, McKay signaled the engine room to full reverse the starboard engine. Here was an extreme emergency. That did not work so he ordered “Stop Engines”. By then water was pouring into the engine room, running across the floor of the ‘tween deck where the cargo was stored. Chief Engineer, McIvor ordered Second Engineer Earl Carr (40) and a fireman out of the engine room. It was clearly apparent that the *Hibou* was going to sink. All three evacuated the engine room.

The *Hibou* now lay almost on her side a few miles off shore. The 3000 gallons in the partly empty diesel tank sloshed over to the starboard side making it impossible for the ship to recover an upright position.



Owen Sound Sun Times November 21 1936

ABANDON SHIP

It was clear to all, *Hibou* was doomed. McKay sounded the emergency signal of four short blasts followed by four more short blasts. He directed someone to tie down the whistle while he remained on the bridge and shouted "Everyone for himself." McKay then began firing flares into the air. The distress signal was heard ashore but nobody there knew where it was coming from.

At the time deckhand Doug McIntosh was already asleep. He awakened when he heard his toothbrush fall from a shelf. Realizing something was amiss, he went up top, looked around, and returned immediately to alert the other deckhands. 16 year old deckhand, Fergus Record was in his underwear washing up just before climbing into bed. Deckhand, Duncan Smart was undressing and had only a shirt and trousers on when he was thrown hard against his bunk by the listing ship. They heard the call "Get above". Bare foot, Record, who had just pulled on his pants, and Smart, also bare foot worked their way on the now severely slanted deck up to the top deck.

Captain McKay instructed Mate Allan to prepare the starboard lifeboat for launch. When Allen reached the boat mounted on the starboard side at the stern, some of the crew were already taking the tarpaulin off. Allen grabbed an axe and cut the lines that were holding the boat down. Along with Engineer Earl Carr and wheelsman Ross Galbraith they attempted to launch the lifeboat. With the others they had to lay down shoulder to shoulder to lift the boat off the chocks but to their dismay it flopped against the davits and would not budge. It was firmly lodged against the davits and would not move.

On seeing the predicament, Captain McKay shouted, "Alright throw the rafts over."

Because the ship was now on her side, it was almost possible to step directly onto the wooden rafts.

**OWEN SOUND SHIP LOST
EARLY ON SATURDAY A.M.
MILE OFF SQUAW POINT**

Owen Sound Sun Times Headline November 21, 1936

On the deck below, McIntosh helped Iona Johnson, the stewardess, escape from her room located on the promenade deck, starboard. She turned and returned toward her room then followed back along the promenade deck, clutching the handrail.



Shoreline near where survivors landed

frozen holding onto the rail afraid to step on to the raft and she remained on the ship. That was the last time anyone saw her.

The Rouse brothers and Galbraith managed to swim a short distance and climb aboard the wooden pallet-like raft in the dark. The suction at the side of the sinking ship made those on the rafts realize they had to get away by trying to position themselves toward the stern so as not to be sucked down.

As they moved away, water reached the dynamo and all electrical systems shut down. The lights of the *Hibou* went dark. The final sinking in the dark was not seen by those on the rafts.

At this point Carr shoved one of the life rafts into the lake, then jumped overboard.

Galbraith managed to push another raft into the water and then jump into the water. He was followed by deckhand Denny Rouse and his brother Earl.

Fergus Record and Doug McIntosh were on another raft which unfortunately had one of the tanks punctured and was more in the water than out.

Record called for Iona Johnson to jump but she was



Wendy Tomlinson of the Community Waterfront Heritage Centre shows a deck chair from the HIBOU (on loan from Grey Roots) at their HIBOU exhibit.

IN THE WATER

The water was terribly cold. Those on the rafts shouted back and forth to each other. They slapped their arms and legs in an attempt to keep warm. When they were not doing that they attempted to paddle using only their hands.

About 7 in the morning the first raft hit the boulder strewn shore on the east side of Owen Sound. Fergus Record reported later they could see a light in a farmhouse window.

The survivors climbed over fallen branches, boulders, and snow covered rocks to eventually reach the home of Mr. and Mrs. Gibbons. There they were taken in, wrapped in warm blankets, and fed hot tea before being shuttled off to the hospital or to their homes.

When news of the sinking reached the public, the shoreline was thronged by people wishing to assist. They brought blankets and hot tea to support the searchers who waded in the shallow water in hip boots, looking for the missing crew. Morbid curiosity seekers and scavengers gathered wreckage from the *Hibou*, now settled in 80' of water a mile off shore from Squaw Point (near present day Hibou Park). There was plenty to pick at the water's edge now littered with wooden framed windows, broken boards, canvas, and even a deck chair.

An organized search for bodies was begun immediately under the direction of Sgt. John McCaffery of the Owen Sound Police Department. Fire fighters assisted by unemployed men from the Welfare Office scoured the beach which was covered in mushy snow and all manner of debris. An oil slick on the water marked exactly where the ship went down. Off shore around the oil slick the tug *Pinola*, owned by John Harrison & Sons, patrolled using grappling hooks in an attempt to find those who went down with the ship. Three days later they found the bodies of Captain Norman McKay, oiler Chester Dunham, and Guy McReynolds, wheelsman. Their bodies were brought to the dockside where dozens of people stood silently, doffing their hats as the bodies were carried to a waiting hearse.

Fireman James Minard's body was found a day earlier floating in the shallow water. A local taxi driver, Carl Davis, drove his car into the water while several men stood on the running board to retrieve the young man's corpse. They saw what appeared to be an additional body floating in deeper water, but there were no small boats nearby at the time so the body was not recovered.

The body of cook, Raymond Earls was found on Monday November 23 and brought to shore. Later according to young Doug McIntosh, Earls told him that he was worried about this last trip of the

season, revealing that he should not go out on the last trip of the season.

The weather worsened over the three days after the sinking so a proposed diving search was called off because of rough seas. The bodies of Murdoch McIvor and Iona Johnson were never recovered. Their bodies remain at the bottom of Owen Sound.

By December 3, the search for bodies was called off by Mr. Malloy. Malloy offered a \$100 reward for the retrieval of each additional body in an attempt to encourage people to continue the search unofficially. None were found.



THE INQUIRY

A preliminary inquiry was ordered by the Canadian Director of Marine Services. Captain Henry King, Supervising Examiner of Masters and Mates, was appointed to conduct the investigation. Between November 30 and December 1 he called six of the survivors and Mr. Malloy, the company manager to testify.

Captain King reconstructed the events leading to the sinking. He concluded that the ship was improperly loaded and top heavy. There was too much freight above the water line on the 'tween deck. The ballast tanks were empty. The coal bunker and fuel bunker were depleted. All this combined, he said, made the centre of gravity too high. Additionally the ship was cranky. The flour bags on the main deck, he had no doubt, collapsed to the starboard side as the ship listed, shifting weight to that side thereby adding to the speed of the list. The wooden shutter on the starboard side (the weakest point on the hull) possibly burst open as it was submerged further and further as the ship listed. There were no gaskets on the steel doors and Capt. King suspected the caulking job around them was poorly done. He surmised that the shutters on the steel doors burst open as they were made of only 1 ¼ inch sheeting. It did not take long for the *Hibou* to sink when all these factors were considered, he concluded.

The responsibility for the sinking was placed squarely on Captain McKay. It was his duty to make sure the *Hibou* was fit to sail. This conclusion was roundly criticized in the city of Owen Sound. Captain Norman McKay was one of the most highly respected captains on Georgian Bay and to put the blame directly on him was to ignore what a fine ship master he was. The newspaper wrote that he was a skipper who took no chances with safety.

Captain King criticized Mate Agnew for not holding lifeboat drills, although he recognized that in this situation no drill would have prepared the crew for this kind of event. Agnew later disputed the claim of Captain King that the cargo could have shifted. "That was impossible," he said in the Owen Sound Sun Times.

FUNERALS FOR THE LOST

The funeral at Captain McKay's home was attended by hundreds from around the province. The officiating minister portrayed him as a "heroic", "brave", "reliant", "self-composed" figure, "lighting flares on the deck of his ship thinking of others before himself."

Guy McReynold's funeral was held the same day as that of Captain McKay. McReynolds had served in WW1 and had distinguished himself in the war. He was given a full military funeral attended by 700 people, complete with an honour guard marching with rifles reversed.



Funeral at the home of Captain McKay

The funerals of the others were less formal and less well attended but, they were part of a city tribute to a tragedy that was at the time not entirely understood.

In the end, a formal investigation was not recommended based on the fact that McKay was lost when the ship sank. With blame directly attributed to the captain's failure to ready his ship for sailing, there was no point in having a formal

investigation. Captain King's recommendation was accepted by his superiors in Ottawa and so the *Hibou* story seemed to be ended.

The sinking did have the effect to stir the Department of Transport into initiating regulations relating to stability tests when upper structures on ships were modified.

However, that was not the end of the story.



Internment of Captain McKay at Greenwood cemetery

THE RISING

The owners of the *Hibou* advertised the sale of salvage rights but no bids were immediately forthcoming until a bid of \$40,000 was made by Quebec based Sincennes- McNaughton Line's (Sin -Mac) upper lakes subsidiary, United Towing and Salvage Company Ltd. Their offer was accepted by the Dominion Transportation Company in 1942. The salvage tug *Bellechasse* and the *Londonderry* salvage barge were dispatched to Owen Sound. An additional salvage barge, the *International* was added to the small flotilla working at the site of the sinking off Squaw Point. Shortly thereafter the *Bellechasse* was called to another location, so the Sin-Mac tug *Eureka* took over the 8 week task of bringing the *Hibou* to the surface.



Divers prepare to descend 84 feet to the HIBOU that by 1942 was embedded in 7 feet of mud

On Friday October 2, 1942 the *Hibou* was slung off the bottom between the two barges. It was a difficult task because the vessel was in over 80' of water and sunk in about 7' of mud. Captain James Thomas Reid oversaw the recovery and operation. This was, he claimed, a most difficult job.

As the *Hibou* was raised to the surface the stack fell back onto the deck. It was corroded at its base after being underwater for so long. The steel pilot house was still intact, but the wooden cabins behind were

a total wreck, Debris covered the main deck. The steel hull was still in good shape. Interestingly a piano in relatively good shape was found amid the wreckage.

Hundreds of people flocked to the harbour side to watch as the tug *Eureka* towed the two barges with the *Hibou* slung between them into the harbour. Piles of pulp wood on the west shore of the harbour where the *Hibou* was towed provided the best viewing of the event if one was able to climb the huge pile located just south of the grain elevator.

There was a question whether the body of Iona Johnson was found in the ship. Captain Reid assured the Owen Sound newspaper that she was not. But, a shawl and pair of woman's shoes were located on board and it was assumed they belonged to the deceased stewardess.

Not much is known about the fate of the *Hibou* after the wreck was towed to Welland. The Scanner, a regular newsletter of the Toronto Maritime History Society says that she was "towed down the Welland Canal and was tucked away at a berth in Montreal."

The Scanner offers the final word on the fate of the *Hibou*.

Sin-Mac officials wrote on June 7, 1943, to C.P.Edwards, Deputy Minister of Transport, advising that repairs to the ship were estimated (somewhat conservatively, we should think) at \$70,000 to \$100,000 and further that Sin-Mac was not prepared to fork out this kind of money to place Hibou in commission. They did not specify what kind of service she might be seeing if she were rebuilt, but they did state that they had received an offer from a U. S. concern that wished to purchase Hibou and operate her in the Caribbean under Panamanian registry. Sin-Mac wanted to know if the government had any objections to the sale.

Apparently there were no objections, for during the summer of 1943 Hibou was sold to the Pan American Steamship Corporation of Panama S. A, Puerto Cortes, Honduras a firm having its head office at New York. She was rebuilt, probably at Sorel, and afterwards her tonnage was registered as 446 Gross, 236 Net. In November 1943, flying the flag of Honduras, Hibou sailed down the St. Lawrence under her own power.

We know virtually nothing about the activities of Hibou in the Caribbean nor do we know what she looked like at this stage, but it is evident that she was not renamed, a rather surprising eventuality. About 1953, Pan American replaced Hibou with two other vessels and shortly afterwards the firm went out of business, either being bought out by another company or else simply folding up their tent and disappearing. Hibou was dropped from documentation about this time and we can only surmise that she was scrapped or laid to rest in some island backwater.

Crew List on the *Hibou*

| Name | Position | Address | Comment |
|-------------------|--------------------------|---|---------|
| Norman Mckay | Captain | 1116 4 th Ave west, Owen Sound | LOST |
| Guy McReynolds | Wheelsman | 658 6 th Street East, Owen Sound | LOST |
| Murdoch Mclvor | Chief Engineer | 224 7 th Street East, Owen Sound | LOST |
| Chester Dunham | Fireman | 791 1stStreet East, Owen Sound | LOST |
| R. Earles | Cook | 1883, 9 th Ave East, Owen Sound | LOST |
| James Minard | Fireman | 1110 2 nd Ave West, Owen Sound | LOST |
| Miss Iona Johnson | Stewardess | 994 3 rd Ave . East, Owen Sound | LOST |
| James Agnew | 1 st Mate | Kilsyth | RESCUED |
| Howard Allan | 2 nd Mate | 464 Alpha Street, Owen Sound | RESCUED |
| Orville Parr | Purser | Barrie | RESCUED |
| Daniel Rouse | Deckhand | 1963 6 th Ave East, Owen Sound | RESCUED |
| Duncan Smart | Deckhand | 1696 4 th Ave West, Owen Sound | RESCUED |
| F Record | Deckhand | 1246 1 st Ave West, Owen Sound | RESCUED |
| D McIntosh | Deckhand | 741 9 th Street East, Owen Sound | RESCUED |
| Ross Galbraith | Deckhand | Tara | RESCUED |
| E Carr | 2 nd Engineer | 745 3 rd Ave West, Owen Sound | RESCUED |
| Ernest Rouse | Deckhand | 1963 6 th Ave East, Owen Sound | RESCUED |

SELECTED SOURCES

Community Waterfront Heritage Centre, Owen Sound.

Library and Archives Canada,

Owen Sound Sun Times

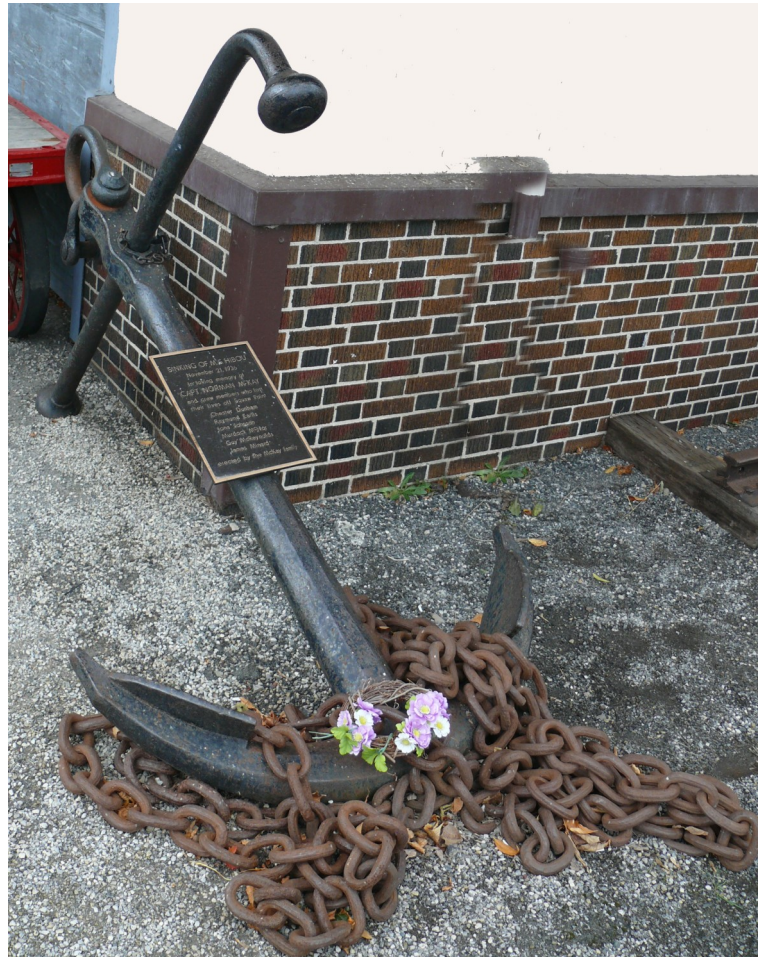
Owen Sound Transportation Company

Personal files of the author

Scanner, v. 7, n. 3 Ship of the Month No. 44, Toronto Maritime History Society

The Motorist's Shortcut, Richard Thomas

The Sinking of the HIBOU - Video - <https://vimeo.com/65735055>, - Richard Thomas.



Inscribed memorial plaque with the names of those who died when the *Hibou* sank on November 22, 1936.

The anchor is located at the Community waterfront Heritage Centre

Owen Sound Ontario.