

within half an hour the already heavy ice which was being blown in from the Beaufort Sea, and flowing from the straits out into the Coronations Gulf, choked the narrows between Lambert Island and Cape Lambert, building up heavy pressures. By this time the St. Roch and the Fort James were abeam of Lambert Island and both were quickly caught in the heavy ice within 100 feet of each other, and unable to move.

The pressure became so great that huge pieces of ice were being forced end over end and out of the water on top of each other, placing the two ships in great danger of being crushed. Fortunately the St. Roch had been designed and built for just such a contingency. Her very rounded bilges and virtually flat bottom caused her to ride up on top of the ice, much as would an orange placed between two hands flat on a table and squeezed between them. In addition, she was reinforced laterally with massive twelve inch square beams built athwart ships across the hold and engine room.

However, the Fort James was soon in trouble. Having been designed as a Grand Banks fisherman, similar to the Bluenose, she had a

long narrow keel and was without lateral reinforcement. Shortly after the heavy pressure started, her Captain called for help, holding a large piece of timber above his head, saying it was a piece of her keel. In fact, the ice had sheered it off, most of her cargo had already dropped through and only the pressure of the ice was holding her afloat.

Realizing that as soon as the wind dropped, the ice pressure would ease and the Fort James immediately sink, Sgt. Henry Larson ordered men from the St. Roch to cross the ice to assist the crew and passengers off the Fort James and over to safety. Within fifteen minutes of this having been done, the wind waned, the pressure eased and the Fort James sank, together with the season's catch of fur which had already been collected from the various company posts.

So close were the two ships that had the ice forced the Fort James to list to port, her masts would have fallen across the St. Roch. But all ended well.

What a life. But the crew of the St. Roch were happy, they were contented, and it was a poor day that didn't have a laugh to it.

c' était hier

Le vrai St-Roch

par l'ex-gend. Raefe Douthwaite

Les jours glorieux du St-Roch ont fait couler beaucoup d'encre. Par contre, si on a relaté avec force détails sa conquête héroïque du Passage du Nord-Ouest et son voyage autour du continent nord-américain, on ne sait que peu de choses des années où le navire accomplissait vaillamment les tâches moins romanesques pour lesquelles il avait été construit.

À l'origine, le St-Roch devait s'acquitter de deux missions importantes. En été, il fallait ravitailler les détachements de la G.R.C. sur la côte ouest de l'Arctique, de

l'Île Herschel à l'ouest, à Cambridge Bay à l'est. À l'époque, ces détachements étaient situés à l'Île Herschel, aux Îles Baillie, à Port-Bernard, Tree River, Coppermine et Cambridge Bay.

En hiver, le St-Roch servait de détachement provisoire d'où partaient les patrouilles d'hiver desservant les campements des Inuit, les camps de chasse au phoque, les missions et les postes de traite hors des circuits couverts normalement par les détachements permanents. La fermeture des détachements de Port-