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Old Time Shipbuilding in Newfoundland

Names of Some Well Known Vessels, Where Built, and Builders Names.

BY JAMES MURPHY.
(Continued.)

A large and influential gathering of the commercial men, members of the Assembly and citizens generally, assembled in the Court House at St. John's, February, 1851, having for its object the encouragement of shipbuilding. Among the many assembled we notice the names of gentlemen who in those years were foremost in the public life of the Colony. Messrs. T. R. Job, member for Trinity, P. F. Little, member for St. John's who was also the first premier under responsible Government; the Speaker of the Assembly, E. Haurahan Esq. one of the representatives for Conception Bay; James J. Rogerson, Matthew Stewart, John Fox, John Barron, F. R. Page, Thomas Byrne, William Walsh, James Murray, Alexander Fraser and G. J. Howsall, Esq. A resolution proposed by Mr. Fox and seconded by Phillip Little, M.H.A., was as follows: "That amongst the occupations to which a people devote themselves, there is none more congenial to their tastes than shipbuilding, a branch, which if encouraged would not only induce embarkation of capital, but would afford employment to large numbers of artisans and laborers and even to the youth now employed, would create a rivalry in naval architecture and in some time would secure Newfoundland tonnage a high reputation."

Let me say that this meeting was the outcome of the energy displayed by the late Hon. James J. Rogerson, a philanthropic gentleman and an ardent temperance reformer, and who had represented the people for many years in the House of Assembly. Before I introduce the names of the vessels or their owners, and by whom built, I will give an extract from a speech delivered by Mr. Haurahan, member for Conception Bay, and who had introduced into the Assembly a bill for the encouragement of shipbuilding the same year that the public meeting was called. Mr. Haurahan said: "No country can exhibit men of superior talent to our Kearneys, Curtis's, Pitmans, Bemisters and others. From £30 to £40 were paid annually for vessels which were imported from other Colonies for sale here. The number of our vessels being 400 which had to be renewed over ten years, so that 40 were required annually."

Now I will give the names of some vessels constructed by our native builders, which many of the more mature of my readers have no doubt been told about before, and maybe they have seen those vessels themselves. Mr. Curtis of Salmonier, St. Mary's Bay, was a reputable builder and during his time engaged at the art, turned out many vessels from his shipyard. One of the best known which was built by Mr. Curtis was the "Michael Anthony Fleming." This vessel was named after Bishop Fleming, the Roman Catholic Bishop of St. John's. She was constructed for the firm of James and Robert Kent, who, in those years, did a thriving business with Ireland. On St. Patrick's Day, March 17th, 1844, Curtis launched from his shipyard at Salmonier the "Michael Anthony Fleming," she was 154 tons, built of the very best material and was classed A-1 at Lloyd's. Many an "exile from Erin" came to this country on the "Michael Anthony Fleming." At Waterford in 1847 she received new decks, masts, spars, galls and rigging. Her length was 84 feet, she was 22 feet 10 inches beam and 19 feet deep, and I forgot to say that when she was launched her sealing crew were on board.

Another of the pretty schooners built by Curtis was "Clio." The ship measured 135 tons and was built for the firm of McKay and McKenzie. She was a very substantial and handsome ship. In 1850 Curtis launched the "Blanche" for the Hon. Lawrence O'Brien. The firm of Bulley & Job had a vessel called the William and Mary built in 1828 at Bonavista Bay. She measured 133 tons, was a sealer, as most all the vessels were then used for. In all parts of Newfoundland vessels were built in the old days.

In an instructive article written five years ago for a Christmas Magazine by Canon Smith, the Rev. Gentleman says of shipbuilding: "A hundred years ago almost every schooner or shallow engaged in the fishery had been built in Nfld., so also had a large part of the ships that took our produce to market. What employment such shipbuilding must have given to our 'hardy men' in the winter season. At that date the local built ships were the pride and glory of our people, but that day has passed. In 1831 a splendid vessel called the 'St. Patrick' the work of a native, was built at the Bay of Islands, she was one of the strongest seal hunters of her time and was known in song and story. I have seen her name made prominent in the long forties in a song published nine years ago in one of our local journals. It had relation to the St. Patrick being jammed one spring in White Bay till the first day of May."

Mr. Grace was in opulence when Kearney built and launched the Rothsay, called after the town in Scotland where John Munn Esq. was born. The Rothsay was built in a dockyard adjoining Victoria Street, Hr. Grace, at half past nine o'clock in the morning in the month of February, 1852, hundreds were on the spot, having assembled there from all parts of Conception Bay to witness the launching. She was christened by Mr. John Fisher, a native of Rothsay, and her builder, Kearney, made a speech, a newspaper at the time commenting on the launching of the Rothsay said: "Hurrah for native talent and success to the good ship Rothsay. How did Kearney and his co-operatives acquire this proficiency. We reply the same hand that oiled up the Grampians and reared Bacallieu. The Rothsay measured 123 feet long, 25 feet beam, 12 feet eight inches deep, new measurement 261 tons, old measurement 313 tons. Her stern was beautifully carved and she had a lovely figure head, composed of triangle, stars, etc. The Hr. Grace newspaper of that date said in relation to the building of the Rothsay: "This is the way to reinstate the Colony, let our outgoings be spent in the community where we derive our incomes. Nothing will impoverish a field so much as carrying off the grass before it is dry to another situation."

John Munn Esq. was noted for his liberality he gave of his bounty to all churches. He helped Bishop Dalton when that clergyman was building the Hr. Grace Cathedral. He gave the Bishop money and sent one of his vessels to Kelly's Island for stone for the erection of the beautiful structure which was destroyed by fire in 1889. Speaking in the assembly forty six years ago Mr. Munn said: "That he never sold a gallon of liquor in his life. He received one or two consignments but sent them back. There were seventy outport merchant," said Mr. Munn, "when I came to the country but there are hardly seven now. He believed that the cause of the trade falling off was brought about by an extravagant use of liquor."

A much talked about vessel built by Kearney in 1855 was the Ida. This vessel was built in the shipyard of the Hon. Chas. Fox Bennett, where the General Post Office now stands. The Ida was christened by Mrs. Bennett, whose name before her marriage to Mr. Bennett was Isabella Sheppard of Clifton, England. It was four o'clock in the evening when the launching took place and a great crowd of people assembled from all parts of St. John's. The Ida was successfully launched across Water St. through the archway of Bennett's and into the water of the Harbour, amid the cheers of the people. I met an old timer a few days ago who told me that he was a boy at the time and that he was a witness to the launching. He further told me that Kearney hung his watch on the side of the archway and told those who said that she would not go through the archway, that he'd put her through without even injuring the watch, a feat which the ingenious Kearney successfully performed.

On Feb. 19th, 1852, at half past seven in the morning at Mr. Stephen Rendell's shipyard at Hant's Harbor, Trinity Bay, Mr. Geo. Pittman launched the Coisair for Stephen March Esq. She was always called March's Coisair. There were two ships of the same name, a description of the other ship I will also render. March's Coisair was christened by Capt. John Hopkins. She was 120 tons new measurement. The Charles was launched the same year for Mr. March. This vessel was hired by the Government for a fishery, cruiser. The spring that Kearney launched the "May Hounsell" the father of the late Archbishop Richard Howley Esq. had a vessel launched at New Perlican. This was the first Coisair. She was built by Mr. Geo. Pittman, son of Mr. Walter Pittman, who was at one time agent for Garland's estate. The Coisair was 84 ft. in length of keel and 93 feet in length of deck with a beam of 23 ft. five inches and a depth of 13 ft. 5 in. She was 205 tons old measurement and 162 tons new measurement. Her top sides were of juniper, she was floored with witchhazel and it was de-

clared that her equal was never built in the Colony. She was begun in Nov. 1841 and completed copper fastened, and launched in July 1842.

(To be continued)

Switzerland Makes Treaty With Berlin

LONDON, Oct. 5.—The trade agreement reached between Germany and Switzerland, according to a Berlin telegram received at Amsterdam, says a Reuter despatch, stipulates that each country's own products and goods so far as they are not necessary for home consumption, may be exchanged. Germany is said to have pledged supplies of 253,000 tons of coal a month

as well as quantities of iron and steel which Switzerland wants to meet her own needs. Both parties have agreed to a speedy settlement of the question of export permits.

Regarding German goods stored in Switzerland, for which no export permit can be granted at present, the Swiss Government has agreed to refrain from seizure or destruction and has promised to release them after cessation of hostilities. Requests for exportations of war materials manufactured in Switzerland from raw material obtained in Germany will be submitted to the examination of a special Swiss expert committee. The agreements, the despatch says, will expire at the end of April 1917.

READ THE MAIL & ADVOCATE

Thrilling Escape From Death of French Airman

PARIS, Sept. 29.—The French aviator, Lieut. Guynemer, who fell a distance of ten thousand feet to-day after shooting down two German aeroplanes, in relating the story of his miraculous escape from death said: "I gave myself up for lost when I began to fall, but thought I would struggle all the same. The wind blew me over our lines, and like a flash I saw a picture of my funeral, for the levers would not budge. In vain I pulled and pushed to right and left. I made on last desperate effort, to

no purpose, and then I saw the field toward which I was dashing down. Suddenly something happened and my speed diminished. Then there was a resounding crash and a violent shock. "When I recovered my wits I was in the midst of the fragments of my machine and practically uninjured. "Am I still alive?" I ask myself. I believe it was the straps which held me to my seat which saved me." On Sept. 16 Lieut. Guynemer was credited with his sixteenth enemy aeroplane. A week later he was reported to have brought down his eighteenth. He was wounded in a fight in the air last March and in subsequent flight was forced to descend between the French and German trenches, but escaped.

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