

Chartrand was buried on a nearby hill overlooking the bay, with a 15-foot-high stone cairn to mark the spot. It stands there still.

On August 3, 1942, fearing they would be stuck for another winter, Larsen broke out of Pasley Bay and re-entered the thick ice. Caught again by the floes, with *St. Roch's* stern out of the water and the bow going under, Larsen blasted her free with explosives. He moved on, ramming the ice and forcing his way into narrow leads. "Thus," he reported, "little by little, the *St. Roch* made headway."

"I got the feeling that I had constantly to match wits with the moving pack ice," Larsen later recalled. "Many a time did I head for an opening in the ice only to watch it crash together just ahead of me, as if it were a living thing deliberately trying to keep me from reaching open water. On other occasions the ice would snap shut behind me, as if it held me in a trap. But it also happened that when things looked hopeless and I was almost resigned to giving up, the ice would suddenly open up...and...the leads would gradually get wider and wider and allow us to slide through the cracks for mile after mile."

On August 12, one of the engine cylinders cracked, and with partial power — at a time when the schooner needed everything she had — they crawled up the Boothia coast to reach Bellot Strait on August 29. It had taken them twenty-five days to make 60 miles. "We had almost reached the point where we were going to congratulate each other in our good fortune," wrote Larsen. Instead, as the ship entered the 18-mile-long, mile-wide strait, she was almost wrecked. Ice racing up the strait had jammed up against an ice floe that was stuck on a submerged reef.

***St. Roch leaving Halifax in
1944 for her return trip to
Vancouver.***

Courtesy Vancouver Maritime Museum

Larsen ordered full speed and rammed the floe, only to stop dead in the water. The ice began to pile up behind *St. Roch*, which, wedged tight, was squeezed by incredible pressure. The timbers groaned as "huge cakes of ice spun and gyrated in large whirlpools. In some of the whirlpools we could see narwhals, lost and bewildered, with their long spiralled horns waving in the air as they stood almost upright in the water."

For nearly an hour the ship remained stuck in the ice. Then, suddenly, the floe, pack ice and schooner broke free and drifted out of the strait. A relieved Larsen anchored *St. Roch* at the Hudson Bay Company's trading post of Fort Ross, at the eastern end of the strait. From there, to leave the Arctic Ocean, they headed up Prince Regent Inlet to Barrow Strait and the settlement of Pond Inlet, where the dogs and much of the ship's gear were landed. Larsen and his crew now prepared for the final leg south to Halifax, where they arrived at 3:30 in the afternoon of October 11, 1942.

"It had not been an easy trip," Larsen reported in his typically understated fashion. The three seasons he had just spent on the passage were the worst years he had seen in the Arctic, and "without hesitation I would say that most ships encountering the conditions we faced would have failed." After a respite that included the installation of a new, larger engine and a new pilothouse on deck,

