



*Sounding with the lead line from St. Roch.*

*Courtesy Vancouver Maritime Museum*

Victoria Island. There, 300 feet from shore, the ship froze into winter quarters in September.

*St. Roch* broke out of the ice on the morning of July 31, 1941. Instead of continuing east, the ship received orders to head west to Tuktoyaktuk. Wartime shortages of transportation and the traditional duties of the RCMP called. After ferrying supplies from Tuktoyaktuk to the communities of Coppermine and Cambridge Bay, Larsen was able to turn east once more on August 19. Slowly working through the ice, he rounded the southern end of King William Island and reached Gjoa Haven on August 27.

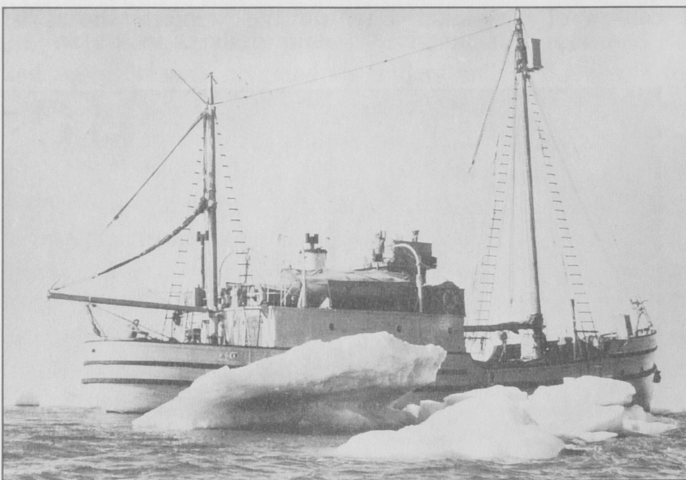
Although the ice was moving south, Larsen

decided to push north against it. He soon realized that the ship was in danger. Heading toward the Boothia Peninsula and the only safe moorage he knew from his readings, Pasley Bay, marked on an 1855 Admiralty chart, Larsen arrived on September 3 and dropped anchor. The ice closed in, trapping *St. Roch* and forcing her down the bay, the weight of the ice overpowering the engines. An opening in the ice brought temporary relief, but when Larsen anchored in the open patch of water, the wind shifted. *St. Roch* was pinned between heavy floes, helplessly drifting with the ice.

The ship hit a submerged shoal and grounded. A lighter, smaller vessel, like *Gjøa*, would have been overwhelmed and crushed. But the thick, rounded hull of *St. Roch* pivoted twice, as she was thrown to port and then to starboard. Ice pushed up over the starboard side and began to fall onto the deck. "I wondered if we had come this far to be crushed like a nut on a shoal and then buried by the ice," Larsen wrote. The ship nearly rolled onto her side, dragging her anchors, when she suddenly popped free.

Larsen managed to hook a wire rope to a rock in the bay. With this, and 1,600 pounds of steel anchors laid out all the way at the end of 90 fathoms (540 feet) of chain, the ship stopped. Nearly ashore, *St. Roch* froze in for the winter. The Mounties used the interlude to patrol the Boothia Peninsula and King

William Island. Tragedy struck when Constable Albert "Frenchy" Chartrand, an old Arctic hand and crew member, died of an apparent heart attack in February 1942. Larsen and an Inuk guide, Equalla, made a 1,140-mile dogsled journey to bring a priest back to the ship for a funeral service.



*St. Roch makes its way through Arctic ice, 1940s.*

*Courtesy Vancouver Maritime Museum*