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The 1913 Storm by Ric Mixter

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|  | Clip11 *SO .. HE SAYS WE’RE GOING TO GO INTO DEEPER WATERS.. I SAID TO MYSELF.. OH NO YOU DON’T , NOT AS LONG AS I’M AT THE WHEEL.* Clip15 *THAT’S WHEN THE CAPT. GAVE UP.. AND I WON THE BATTLE.* |
|  | **My quest to find eyewitnesses to Great Lakes maritime events launched with an interview I never thought possible. It was 1993.. some 80 years after the Great Storm of 1913 and a newspaper search turned up a sailor who had been in the King of Storms. Ed Kanaby had recently suffered a stroke and his daughter didn’t know what he would remember or what he could communicate. His memory of the tragic gale was perfect.. but the ninetyseven year old’s hearing required his daughter to repeat my questions by shouting into his ear.** |
|  | Clip16 *TELL HIM THE NAME OF THE SHIP.. THE SHIP I WAS ON. .H.B. HAWGOOD. H.B. HAWGOOD.* |
|  | **The *HB Hawgood* was a 424 foot steel freighter launched in 1902 in Lorain Ohio. It was far 100 feet shorter than the largest ships on the lakes but still a contender when the winds of November turned nasty. The *Hawgood* had a relatively event free sailing record, except that it’s captain vanished one afternoon while sailing on Lake Erie in the spring of 1905. Capt Thomas Ellis’ body was picked up two days later and by his head injuries it was theorized that his occasional fainting spells caused him to slip and hit his head while going overboard. In 1913 a different captain skippered the *Hawgood.*** |
|  | Clip17 WHAT WAS THE CAPTAIN’S NAME. I’M NOT SURE.. BUT I THINK IT WAS CAPTAIN MAY. M-A-Y. THE FIRST MATE WAS CHARLES DAVIS. THAT WAS HIS FIRST MATE. |
|  | **Kanaby was a farm boy who grew up in Michigan’s thumb. He frequently watched ships drift by on Lake Huron and soon signed aboard the *Hawgood.*** |
|  | **Headed back north for a load of grain in northern Canada, the Hawgood was still on Lake Erie when the barometer started to fall. During its transit up the Detroit River the gale hit with initial fury on Northern Lake Michigan.** |
|  | **The storm was actually two different systems that converged on the Great Lakes. Arctic winds dropped the temperatures to single digits as the low pressure system moved in. Captains watched as the barometers in plummeted.. indicating stormy weather approaching Southwest winds hit the northern lakes on Friday November 7th.** |
|  | **The steam tug *James H Martin* sought shelter on St Martin’s Island north of Green Bay Wisconsin. They shared dinner on board their schooner barge called *Plymouth* when the wind started shifting to the northwest, exposing their hiding place.** |
|  | **The *Martin* was an old tug that could barely pull the *Plymouth* when it was empty. They were bound for Mackinaw Straits.. where a massive load of cedar posts awaited their arrival.** |
|  | **This trip was set to pay off over 8 thousand dollars owed by the tug’s owners McKinnon and Captain William Scott. The fight over this debt sent Scott to jail, so chief engineer McKinnon was forced to hire an unknown captain named Louis Setunsky. The lumber company asked US Marshalls to put a deputy on board to protect the ship and cargo from harm. Milwaukee headquarters assigned former undersheriff Christ Keenan to go on the fateful trip. Keenan had run-ins with the old tug and it’s engineer before. As the undersheriff of Menominee County he was ordered to go aboard to collect the female cook’s undergarments in September of 1913. This bizarre request came after engineer McKinnon requested the corset and stockings that he had given to Elizabeth DeBeck. She ultimately refused McKinnon’s proposal for marriage and McKinnon wanted his gifts back. Miss DeBeck sued for the embarrassment and won $50. The jury felt so bad they also awarded $60 for the gifts she ultimately returned. McKinnon reportedly gave them to the new cook of the tug *Martin*. The new girlfriend,Margaret Olive didn’t know she had signed on as cook on an unseaworthy ship- but as the winds howled on St Martin’s Island, she figured she’d take her chances aboard the tug rather than the old barge. The ship pulled out an attempted a run through Poverty Island Passage, when the tug started taking on water and losing steam pressure in the engine.** |
|  | **Normally reading 110 pounds, the gage struggled to point 60. Lake Michigan was soaking what remained of the dry coal in the engine compartment and twice Capt Setunsky was thrown from the wheel. It took 6 hours to make three miles.. and a decision had to be made regarding their tow and the seven men aboard.** |
|  | **At 7am Saturday they approached tiny Gull Island. Figuring the *Plymouth* had just been recaulked and contained steel arches from a rebuild in Bay City, McKinnon and Setunsky decided to order the *Plymouth* to anchor. With enough sail for one mast and two brand new lifeboats, they figured this was their only option. The Martin blew three blasts on their horn to tell Capt Axel Larsen to drop his 3 thousand-pound anchor. The winds were raging now at 60 miles per hour and it was too dangerous to take the crew and Marshall Keenan aboard the tug. With no radio they could only cut the line and sail away to the protection of the Garden Peninsula in Upper Michigan.** |
|  | **72 hours later they had the *Martin* pumped dry and set course for Gull Island. To their horror, the schooner was nowhere to be seen.** |
|  | **Continuous searches by the tug and the cutter *Tuscarora* would be futile. A week later some details of what happened washed across the lake to a remote shoreline north of Manistee. Marshall Christ Keenan was found wearing a lifejacket and a section of rope was found around his waist, which some mariners believed was used to tie him to the mast of the *Plymouth*. The flag at Menominee County was lowered to half staff in his honor and word of a bottled message came to his family.** |
|  | **Written on a coal receipt for the *Plymouth*, the note was written by a fellow crewmate and was allegedly from Keenan. “Dear wife and children. We were left up here by McKinnon, captain of the tug James H Martin at anchor. He went away and never said goodbye or anything to us. Lost one man last night. We have been out in the storm 40 hours. Goodbye dear ones I might see you in heaven. Pray fo me. Christ K. ” In a postscript Keenan reminded his family that Huebel Lumber owed him 35 dollars so they could collect it. He closed with “Good-bye forever.”** |
|  | **Two other members of the crew would be recovered. Capt Axel Larsen was found in December near Muskegon. 17 year old John Johnson was found in Platte Bay, north of Frankfort Michigan. Four others were never seen again.** |
|  | **Just south of where the *Plymouth* disappeared was the burned remains of the first victim of the 1913 Storm. At 3am Saturday morning the *Louisiana* crashed ashore on Washington Island, near where the barge *Halsted* had beached. The crew were somewhat protected in Washington Harbor, but it was soon discovered that a fire was raging below decks. The crew abandoned the ship and just made it ashore when the *Louisiana* was engulfed and burned to the waterline. Only its engine remained. The crew waded through snowdrifts until they found a farmhouse and sheltered during the storm that was far from complete.** |
|  | **On Lake Superior the Keweenaw Peninsula of Michigan was being assaulted by high winds and waves. The *Turret Chief* was blown off course from Fort William Ontario and ended up on a rocky remote shoreline in Michigan. 15 feet from shore about 6 miles east of Copper Harbor, the crew used a ladder to abandon ship when the ice threatened to tip it over.** |
| *Nottingham* Parisian island 3 lost? | **Near the *Turret Chief’s* destination of Fort William, the *Leafield* was in trouble. This British-built tramp was spotted by the freighters Franz and Hamonic in distress near Angus Island. One captain said he saw the ship on the rocks just 14 miles from the safety of their port of call. The ship and crew vanished. It’s one of three ships that have yet to be located.** |
| *JT Hutchinson* on rocks whitefish bay | **A half dozen ships were tossed on the beach on the east end of Superior. Whitefish Bay.. famous for being the destination of safety for the *Edmund Fitzgerald*.. was now a junkyard of ships. The *JT Hutchinson* was on the rocks, the *Hartwell* near the Iroquois Lighthouse. The wooden steamer *Major* was abandoned by its crew about thirty miles north of Whitefish after they discovered a leak. The *AM Beyers* took the crew off and left the derelict to the storm. Amazingly, the old steamer survived. The *GG Barnum* towed it into port and demanded a rescue fee.** |
|  | **The *William Nottingham* hit the rocks 3 miles north of Parisienne Island. Exposed on all sides and with no radio to call for help, three men jumped into a lifeboat to row 6 miles to the mainland. They barely made it to the water when a wave flipped the boat and killed all three men. The rest of the crew were stranded until a barge came out to salvage the grain cargo. The revenue cutter *Tuscarora* made an early visit to the wreck-site when a storm prompted a rescue from the ship. The cutter pushed its nose into the shipwreck and took off all but four of the command crew. They broke their anchor chain and lost an anchor in the process. The lightering barge also had to be rescued when her moorings broke in the waves. The *Nottingham* was later salvaged, but the cargo was dumped into Lake Superior.** |
|  | **The *Tuscarora* picked up a temporary anchor at the Sault and headed west on Superior. It visited the abandoned *Turret Chief* and later found the *LC Waldo* off Gull Island at the tip of the Keweenaw Peninsula. Locked in ice, they would realize that lifesavers had only recently been there to rescue the crew.** |
| *Waldo* rescue | **The rescue missions would lead to the most gold medals ever given out for a single storm. A Crew from Eagle Harbor braved 30 miles on the open lake to get to the stranded freighter. A second team left from Portage.. near Houghton to run 90 miles to the wreck.** |
|  | **Inside the Waldo the crew had gathered in the tiny windlass room, building a fireplace out of the captain’s bathtub. Down to a can of tomatoes some 90 hours after running aground on Gull Rock.. they were eyeing their pet bulldog as supper when the lifesavers chipped their way through the iced ship. John Beck removed his boots, using his wool socks to grip the icy ship as he scrambled aboard. Two woman wept with joy as the 24 survivors were divided amongst the rescue teams and headed to shore.** |
|  | **Of 21 lifesaving gold medals awarded in 1915, 17 were for the Waldo Rescue. The wreck was removed and rebuilt only to sink after a long career on its way to the scrapyard in Italy.** |
| *HB Smith* | **One of the greatest mysteries of the storm was the whereabouts of the steamer *Henry B Smith*.** |
|  | **Newspaper accounts of Jimmy Owen’s rush to get loaded at Marquette paint an ominous outcome. Frozen ore in the traincars had delayed departure Saturday and storm warnings prompted the loaders to postpone the transfer. Captain Owen pushed for the crew to chop the ice free and workers even started fires beneath the frozen ore to get it to move. High waves complicated the loading and Owen supposedly demanded the HB Smith lashed to the northside of number five to prevent the storm from slowing his progress. 2 inch lines snapped in the fury and he reluctantly pulled away to wait until it calmed a bit. Thinking the worst had passed, he took on the last of the ore Sunday and pulled away without all 32 hatches being secured for bad weather. A squall built as he left the harbor at 630pm, and captains aboard the *Denmark, Frontenac* and *Choctaw* remarked their astonishment that he’d leave port in such a condition.** |
| **2nd mate James Burke got sick and left ship.** | **Historians still argue today about his rush to leave Marquette. Headlines from an interview with his sister said he laughed at dangerous storms. Stories that he was late all season and feared for his job were countered with reports from the ship owner that it wasn’t true.** |
| **4 oars and deckhouse section found. 525’ launch 1906** | **Wreckage washing ashore east of Marquette soon proved his decision was fatal. Four oars marked SMITH came ashore as well as a section of deckhouse. Eventually two bodies floated across the lake and were picked up. The only survivor was second mate James Burke who had left the Smith because of pneumonia. Capt Jimmy Owen was never found.** |
|  | **Where did the *Smith* end up? Witnesses saw the ship turn west past the storm tossed breakwalls. Owen wasn’t headed for the Soo.. and he wasn’t laughing at the storm as his sister suggested. He had realized his mistake and turned for the protection of Keweenaw Peninsula. He made thirty miles and his haste poured water into his middle hatches and the *Smith* sank beneath the waves off Big Bay Michigan. That’s where wreck hunters Jerry Elliason and Ken Merryman found the ship 100 years later.** |
| *Bite Elliason Ken* | 9:54:52 Jerry *we were looking for that Uboat off of New Foundland and what got us looking for new ways of finding wrecks and it’s a long way away so looking for them in data is easier than getting out there especially in the winter.* |
|  | **That was Jerry Elliason. He and his wife worked on government surveys in the ocean and lakes and realized several metallic anomalies in Lake Superior lined up with known shipwrecks off Whitefish point. Then there was a big 500 foot blip north of Marquette.** |
|  | 9:42:58 Ken It had a good magnetic signature in a relatively quiet area.. |
|  | **Ken Merryman knew that had to be checked out with a survey in this remote area of Michigan.** |
|  | 9:46:30 Ken *we got the sounding and on the first or second pass with the sidescan it was like 400 feet from the actual mark on the chart. It showed a rise on both ends and nothing in the middle. I thought maybe it’s broken in the middle!* |
|  | **As deep as the *Edmund Fitzgerald*.. it was beyond their capabilities as deepwater divers. So they put a camera on a line.** |
|  | 9:47:23 ken *you have to imagine trailing a camera 500 feet below you.. you have to let it drop and turn.. you drift across it.. you really don’t know where the camera is relative to you* |
|  | **It didn’t take long before the camera captured the name on the stern.. confirming the long-lost Henry B Smith had been found.** |
|  | 9:56:31 Jerry *this one is upright on the bottom with its masts standing basically intact.. that’s about as good as it gets!* |
|  | **Ken says the only thing better is to find the other 1913 ship still missing on Lake Superior. And they’re trying.** |
|  | 45:27 Ken *we did try to locate the Leafield also.. I said geeze Jerry.. the Leafield is another victim of the 1913 Storm.. would I love to find that! What a great story that would be if we could find both of them!* |
|  | **There is a shipwreck hunter with two 1913 ship discoveries. Dave Trotter and his team have scoured Lake Huron for shipwrecks over the years. He discovered the *John McGean* off Port Hope Michigan in 1985 and then announced the *Hydrus* had been found in July of 2015.** |
|  | **Fleetmate *Argus* had been found near the same area in 1972 by Dick Race. Each are in water too deep for sport divers. Each were lost with their entire crew.. with no survivors to say what happened in the storm. But there was an eyewitness to four ships that were lost.. perhaps the last person to ever see the ships underway. His name.. Ed Kanaby. Wheelsman on the *HB Hawgood.*** |
|  | Clip1 : *on a Sunday morning. that’s a long time ago. ah.. coming through Port Huron. a fella says to me.. says see that ship? I said yeah. he said ''that's the Regina, a Canadian ship'. I said.. looks like we're going to have company.* |
|  | ***Regina* had left Sarnia 5:30 November 9th making steam for Harbor Beach. Loaded with general merchandise like tar, scotch, barbed wire, silverware and hundreds of bails of hay, *Regina* was scheduled to visit several small ports before the winter freeze.** |
|  | **The arctic front pushed through the Ohio Valley Sunday morning, weakening as it hit Lake Huron. A more powerful storm from Virginia raced into the low pressure.. loaded with moisture from the Atlantic Ocean. Storm warnings were raised and snow began to fall. Winds raged to 60 miles per hour and held for 16 hours straight. Kanaby fought to keep the *Hawgood* on course up Michigan’s coast.** |
| noon Sunday met price n sand bay | CLIP 1 *the wind was strong and every few minutes a gust of wind come up, stronger than the one before, but it never ceased.. stay right there until the next gust of wind would come up still stronger..* |
|  | **Peering through the snow Kanaby could make out an ocean freighter making its way through the waves.** |
|  | clip3 *on the way up. looked to the east and there was another little boat-don’t know what it was.. but later someone said that was the wex.. wex.. Wexford* |
|  | clip4 *we went on north and the seas.. out of Saginaw Bay.. looked like mountains. oh, them seas was strong.* |
|  | CLIP2 *by the time we got to Harbor Beach, it was really a blowing. we went on further, about Port Hope, and the captain called down..he says.. getting pretty strong, gotta turn around go back. so '-hard to port, turned around & headed south* |
|  | **Turning around in the gale was the most dangerous part. Iced up and with waves crashing into their side, they started back down to the safety of the St Clair River. Ed was sure he’d see the Regina on the way to Port Huron.** |
|  | clip7 *and on the way back… going south..i looked to the east and i didn”t see that little boat anymore. it must have tipped over and sank. i think it was headed for Goderich.. but never got there.* |
|  | **The fate of the Regina became apparent as the Canadian coast became littered with the ship’s general cargo. Near Port Franks.. some thirty miles from where the freighter left Sarnia.. a lifeboat was found on its side with two frozen sailors aboard. In all, ten crewmen would be found on the beach. Wheelsman Walter McInnes was identified by his diary.. and money order receipts to his mom in Owen Sound. He had sent $400 home to her over the shipping season. Regina’s Captain would be found that next year.. with his diary still intact. “loading hay.. clouds and wind” was his last entry November 7th.** |
|  | clip8 *so.. about....white rock.. it started to snow\*. and oh, how it snowed.. whatta blizzard.. couldn’t see nothing, so.. we kept on a going. and i looked up ahead.. here comes a boat. oh, that crazy man.. coming out into a storm like this.. about a 90 mile gale. how much stronger i don’t know.* |
|  | **The Hawgood’s captain and wheelsman were the last to see that ship.. The *Charles S Price*. It flipped over and floated 8 miles north of Port Huron. Photographs of the overturned freighter made front pages around the country.. at first because it couldn’t be identified.** |
|  | **Dubbed the mystery ship, newspapers clamored to find divers who could be the first to discover the name. meanwhile half of the Price’s crew floated ashore, and the ship’s assistant engineer was announced alive and well in Ohio. Milton Smith had a bad dream about his family and took it as an omen.. leaving the Price as it loaded coal. He was now the sole survivor of his crew and he was asked to come to Port Franks to identify bodies.** |
|  | **Engineer Franks was puzzled to find his boss John Groundwater among the lost of the Regina. He was told that Groundwater had a Regina lifebelt around his shoulders. He assured him John was the chief engineer on the Price.** |
|  | **Newspapers conjoured all kinds of stories from this. They quoted experts who believed the ships collided or that the Regina tried to rescue Price sailors. This mystery would remain even after diver William Baker announced the ship was the Price.. and there was no evidence of collision on the underwater hulk.** |
|  | **Back in the storm.. Kanaby was about to witness another of Lake Huron’s victims.** |
|  | clip9*.. it was the Isaac M Scott headed out into the storm.. but it never came back..* |
|  | **Capt May recalled the encounter in a local newspaper. “the Scott was met 5 or 6 miles north of Port Huron light with seas breaking over her. I thought her captain was foolish to leave the river. I would have given my head to be in shelter.”** |
|  | Clip10 *we got back the Isaac M Scott and the captain called down and he said we’re gonna turn around and go in deeper waters.. That scared me. I got scared.* |
|  | **The Scott nearly made it to the top of Lake Huron, but the storm finally took the crew near Alpena. It’s rudder was ripped from the ship as it dipped into 200 feet of water off Thunder Bay Island. The wreck was discovered by Kent Bellrichard in 1971.** |
|  | **Kanaby’s ride through the King of Storms was also about to end. Captain May believed his best bet was to avoid going aground. They sounded the depths around the ship and realized they were getting closer to the Canadian coastline. He opted for another dangerous turn in the raging winds.** |
|  | Clip11 *so .. He says we’re going to go into deeper waters.. I said to myself.. Oh no you don’t , not as long as i’m at the wheel. So he said head her into the wind.. And that’s when i really got scared-and I thought.. Oh no you don’t.. Not as long as I’'m a wheelsman. And i gave her a port wheel, and I threw the ship out of control.. On purpose,* |
|  | Clip12 *everytime he wanted to go into deeper water, it threw the ship out of control, and the capt changed his mind and dropped the other anchor* |
|  | **It was now up to the waves, which plowed them close to Corsica Shoals and Point Edward.** |
|  | Clip13 *so let it pound and dragged anchors.. And that saved the ship.. And the crew. By throwing the ship out of control but nobody else knew it but me so we just laid there.. Pounding,.. Heading north. Until we hit bottom. And I was at the wheel .. And I think that’s what saved the ship* |
|  | **News accounts from Captain May never say anything about a disobeying wheelsman, but what is known is that the crew survived and the ship had over 20 thousand dollars in damage. The season wasn’t over and the skipper asked Ed to take the wheel once again.** |
|  | Clip18 *we laid on the beach, laid there for a week.. Got pulled off, and i made two more trips after that and laid her up in Buffalo. Yeah..i made 2 trips.. I was going to quit but i was the only wheelsman on the ship so the captain coaxed me to stay.. Or he’d have to lay up the boat. So i stayed and made 2 more trips after that.* |
|  | **Captain Mays believed this to be the worst storm in decades.** |
|  | “*I have been a master of boats for twenty years and this is the worst storm I’ve ever encountered.”* |
|  | **Ed would sail on two more ships after the 1913 Storm. He then joined the family elevator repair business. Just a few months after my interview he passed away.** |
| Wexford. | **The ocean freighter Ed saw on Lake Huron was headed for the small town of Goderich in Ontario Canada, loaded with 96 thousand bushels of wheat for James Richardson and Sons. Locals recalled hearing the distress calls of what they believed to be the *Wexford* as it attempted to make port in the storm. Wexford wasn’t the only ship trying to get home.** |
|  | 56:13 *When we got near Goderich there was no possibility of Getting in there. The waves were 35—40 feet high, the worst they had ever been And the wind was 60 mph in spasms.* |
|  | **Ted Bullard was 11 years old in 1913, and school had been cancelled due to a flu epidemic in Ontario. His buddy’s dad Patrick McCarthy was skipper on a lake freighter which was stuck up in Port Arthur because the grain loading system was frozen.** |
| FLU EPIDEMIC. | 54:11 Tom's *dad called his mother and said if Tom and Ted would like to come up where he was loading, he’d be glad to have us ride back on the ship with him.* |
|  | **After a train ride to the top of Lake Superior, Tom and Ted were ready for the slow cruise down the lake. What they didn’t realize was that they would sail into the King of Storms… twice.** |
| TED BULLARD | 54:37 *so we got up there, got aboard the ship. (edit)* 55:1? *We got out of Port Arthur onto Lake superior right smack into the storm. (edit) The night before we left, the Chef cooked a delicious chicken dinner and the next day— you could imagine what happened to the chicken dinner in the rough seas.* |
|  | **Capt McCarthy was sailing into the same waves that sank the Leafield and HB Smith.. passing nearly a half dozen stranded ships on Whitefish Bay.. and turning around wasn’t an option.** |
|  | 55:21 *it was so rough that we didn‘t chance going back into the harbor.. For fear that we’d crash into the piers.* |
|  | **The steamer Turret Cape finally made it to the St Mary’s River and locked through to Soo. Normally they’d just drop anchor in the river and wait things out.. there was no such luck** |
|  | 55:31 *when we finally got there.. There was no place left to dock, so we were forced out onto Lake Huron.. Which turned out to be the roughest of all the Great lakes during the storm.* |
| Launched may 22 | **The *Turret Cape* was passing DeTour, the same route that several doomed ships had passed just minutes before. Even Canada’s largest freighter loaded here and headed into the storm.. and the *James Carruthers* hasn’t been seen since.** |
| Passed soo 1:53am nov 9. Sheadle hydrus carruthers. | ***Carruthers* was barely a few months old, launched May 22nd 1913 on Georgian Bay. Collingwood shipbuilding boasted it was the sturdiest ship they had ever built, steel strengthened for storms on the lakes. It was hauling 375 train cars of wheat.. an amazing 370 thousand bushels.. bound for the flour mills at Port Colborne on Lake Erie.** |
|  | **Last seen loading coal at DeTour, the Carruthers entered Lake Huron around two in the morning November 9th. The only other clues from the ship’s final moments were around the wrists of the officers found. Captain William Wright washed ashore near Point Clarke. His watch was frozen at 1:15. Chief Engineer Edward O’Dell’s watch stopped at 1:15.** **A lifeboat and oars marked Carruthers was found further down the lake near Goderich.** |
|  | **Why had the staunch Carruthers foundered when Ted Bullard’s transport survived? Ted believed it was the rounded submarine shape of the Turret Cape that was key.** |
|  | 56:oo *Primarily because of the construction of the ship.. Which*  *Was a semi—whaleback rounded type of hull. We kept going because to stop would mean we‘d blow ashore somewhere.* |
|  | **That meant sailing past their homes in Goderich.. and down to the bottom of Lake Huron.** |
|  | 56:46 *so we kept going to Sarnia, when we got there the storm was subsiding so We just circled out into Lake Huron away from shore.*  57:o4 ? *Days later we got near shore to yell to somebody to call our parents. We wanted to tell our folks we were safe and were heading for Goderich.Obviously in those days there was no ship to shore radio so they knew nothing of us.* |
|  | **Ted and Tommy had hunkered down in the aftercabin.. to scared to look outside at the tempest that had taken 8 ships and their crews. When the winds calmed they turned for home.** |
|  | *I can‘t recall the day we pulled into goderich harbor. But when we*  *Pulled in the town band was there, and most of the citizens were cheering and Waving us in.* 58:31 *it was the greatest thing in the world to be home safe and sound.* |
|  | **Ted wasn’t sure who was more happy.. the boys or their parents.. who had waited for days while bodies and wreckage came ashore.** |
|  | 57:55 *they had no idea what happened to us and-they were scared out of their wits.* |
|  | **Amazingly, Ted’s encounter with the King of Storms wasn’t his first brush with death. As a kid he nearly drowned in a boating accident… and both nautical mishaps later led him to** t**eaching boating safety for the Coast Guard reserve. Ted passed away in Saginaw in July of 1996.** |
|  | **The aftermath of the Great Storm took years to rebuild. The human toil could never be replaced- 260 sailors lost.. evidenced by the stockpile of mail at the floating postoffice in Detroit. 76 pieces from the ships lost with all hands.. including mail for the chief of the *Price*, John Groundwater.** |
|  | **Reid Salvage reportedly made over a million dollars recovering the ships lost to the storm. Tugs pulled the Nicholas off the rocks at North Point and got it to Alpena in record time. The Matoa was raised from a reef near Point Aux Barques. The Buckley was brought home after time on shore at Harbor Beach and the Northern Queen and Matthew Andrews were pulled free from the beach at Port Franks. Reid even pulled Ed Kanaby’s boat HB Hawgood free nearby at Point Edward.** |
|  | **Reid pulled The Acadian off Sulfur Island and saved the Nottingham which had a quarter million dollar value. The Howard M Hanna, pummeled by the storm on Lake Huron was firmly on the rocks next to the Port Austin Lighthouse which was built to keep ships away from the reef. Insurance company offered Tom Reid 75-percent of the Howard M Hanna’s value but he instead asked to buy the ship and cargo for 13 thousand dollars. He had it off the rocks by the time negotiations finished.** |
| Reid Salvage | **But perhaps the most miraculous recovery would take place two years after the storm. After an exhaustive search, lightship 82 was discovered in 62 feet of water 13 miles southwest of Buffalo New York.** |
|  | **For over a year maritime experts argued whether Captain Hugh Williams would weigh anchor and leave his post that lit the reef at Point Abino Ontario. His wife Mary insisted he wouldn’t.. and that’s where his tiny lightship was found on May 12 1914.. on post lying on its side. Ironically.. the only crewman found was located in Buffalo justthree days earlier. Chief Engineer Charles Butler was found just a few blocks from his home.** |
| LV 82 | **Within days of discovery by the tender USS Surveyor, Detroit diver Jacob Beaudry was feeling his way along the hull.. smashing the locked doors to try and reach the crew. A thorough search of the bunkroom and pilothouse turned up nothing.** |
|  | **Two salvors failed in attempts to raise the sunken lightship. It was Tom Reid and Diver Louis Meyer who succeeded in getting chains around the hulk. After pontoons did the heavy lifting, Meyer surfaced to enjoy some donuts and a much needed bathroom break. He immediately broke out in blisters and cramped over from the bends. He had stayed below beyond the limit and surfaced too quickly. With no decompression chamber.. Louie had to suffer and hope the damage wouldn’t be permanent. Already the lighthouse service’s deadliest disaster.. Lightship 82 nearly claimed a seventh victim.** |
|  | **Meyer eventually recovered in time to see the lightship get towed to shallow water. The slow process of pumping out sand that filled the ship began and eventually the ship was brought into Buffalo, where the government dock was littered with debris from the ship. Among the wreckage was the ship’s library.. underwater for two years now drying in the hot summer sun. The ship was rebuilt in Detroit and sailed the lakes again, reporting to northern Lake Michigan on 11 foot shoal near Escanaba. It was taken out of service and President Roosevelt signed papers to transfer it to a VFW post in Boston in June of 1936. Newspapers say vandals burned it in the mid 1940’s.** |
|  | **One of the most poignant stories of the lightship story is that of the captain’s wife searching for days aboard the tender Crocus. Newspapers told of wreckage coming ashore.. including a piece of wood that had a message scratched into it. “Goodbye Nellie.. ship breaking up fast. Williams”. Newspapers were quick to point out William’s wife’s name was Mary and she said he never called her Nellie. What was the mixup? The Evening News later claimed a young boy tattled on his friend Eddie Clark.. who supposedly carved the message as a hoax. Mary held fast in her belief in her husband.. she put up a tombstone in their home cemetery of Onekema. I visited the graveyard a few years ago to find her name is now on that stone as well.** |
|  | **Lake Michigan’s wreck of the Plymouth had repercussions into 1914. An inquiry into the temporary captain Louis Setunsky unveiled he wasn’t licensed for the area he was sailing. He and McKinnon lost their licenses. McKinnon eventually found a wife.. marrying the cook that had survived the storm with him.** |
|  | **I have been most intrigued by the Plymouth story. In the early 1960s a diver named Art Reetz did an aerial survey of Poverty Island and told SCUBA Diver magazine he had found the Plymouth. In the 1980’s several divers from Milwaukee claimed the same wreckage as Plymouth. This is highly unlikely. Left south of Poverty by a few miles with a three thousand pound anchor down and only enough sail for one mast, they certainly didn’t buck 60 mile per hour winds to sail to Poverty Island. I toured the wreckage near the old lighthouse to find it’s likely the old Erastus Corning or Dick Somers.. both lost in that exact location. Plymouth is south east of Gull Island in deep water, hidden for over 100 years awaiting discovery.** |
|  | **Wexford was discovered in 2000 and unlike so many of the 1913 ships, it was upright and in less than 100 feet of water. It’s an amazing dive exploring what’s left of the hull. All of the cabins were destroyed by the gale.. and the rudder is missing. All clues to the ship’s final moments in the King of Storms.** |
|  | **The discovery of the Regina in 1986 squelched several rumors that persisted since the earliest headlines. No evidence of collision existed.. only a hole that one diver felt was caused when the ship hit bottom. It’s anchors were deployed and the telegraph was all stop.. indicating the captain ordered abandon ship off Lexington Michigan. They may have made shore.. but 16 hours of relentless winds pushed them across the lake to Canada. They never had a chance.** |
|  | **Diver Wayne Brusate received a permit to salvage the cargo found on the bottom in 80 feet of water. Salvagers from Freedom Marine in Vancouver spent some 4 thousand dollars a day recovering mostly bottles.. including those containing Heinz ketchup and 300 bottles of French champagne and Whyte and MacKay scotch whisky. Auctions failed to bring in the dollars needed to cover the recovery operations.. most went for less than a hundred dollars a bottle. One diver used the champagne to toast his wedding.. and it was featured in People Magazine. One strange fact was that of the eating utensils recovered.. there were only spoons. No knives or forks were found in the wreckage. Also missing was the reported 86 thousand dollars in gold coins supposedly inside Regina’s safe.** |
|  | **Today the Regina continues to captivate divers as one of the most dived wrecks in Lake Huron. The sad reality is that explorers have been lost swimming inside the wreck.. increasing the death total claimed when the ship was lost to the King of Storms.** |
|  | **This hour long look at the 1913 Storm was made possible by a list of people who would be impossible to thank completely. Friends have copied news accounts from Menominee Michigan, Collingwood Ontario, Milwaukee and Marquette. I was lucky to visit Goderich with historian and TV anchor Eric Jylha and authors like Fred Stonehouse, Wes Oleszewski and the late Paul Carroll and Jim Clary had reams of information to share. I’ve dove the 1913 wrecks *Louisiana, Wexford, Price, Regina* and talked with divers who explored the *Smith, Argus, Hydrus, Scott* and *McGean.* To all the boat captains and safety divers I say a heartfelt thank you. To those who continue to search for the *Plymouth, Leafield* and *Carruthers* I wish you safe travels and good luck. Just a reminder that the interviews with survivors and divers are copyright Airworthy Productions and only found in audio form in this podcast. Written permission is required to re-broadcast them in any form. I’ll leave you with a song written by David O Norris and Dan Hall based on my interview with wheelsman Ed Kanaby. This program is dedicated in his memory.** |