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Published by Ronald Caplan on 1977/6/1

The Wreck of the "Watford" by Sara MacLean, Glace Bay It was early morning, September 10th, 1932 • very early morning, about two o'clock. The S.S. Watford of Watts, Watts & Co., England, was one of a fleet that included the Wanstead, the Wandover, and several other coal burning vessels plying between Sydney and Montreal in ballast. As was the custom of these little colliers, she passed between St. Paul's Island and Cape North on her way to Sydney. Returning to Montreal, the ships must travel outside St. Paul's. It was a mild night for the time of year, and a light wind was coming from the south-east in gentle puffs with calms between them. By the time the Watford was clear of St. Paul's the wind had strengthened. The barometer was falling alarmingly and even though the temperature rose even more, a heavy rain began to fall. The Watford was close on this course, and riding high in ballast. She took the force of the ever-increasing wind on her port quarter. When the duty officer called the captain to the bridge, he ordered increased revolutions from the engine and a little later a change of course to keep her headed more to the east, compensating for the wind drifting her dangerously towards land. By 5 a.m. there was a heavy sea running, torrents of rain, and the wind had reached nearly 100 m.p.h. The little collier struggled on trying to keep, boring to the south and east, whilst all the time wind and sea were forcing her towards the coast always too close to starboard. Sydney harbour was their only refuge. but by the time they came abreast of the entrance it would have been suicide to turn the Watford's head and put her broadside to the sea that was running. The last hope was to try to keep sea-room until they could round the southern head of Morien Bay and slip in behind Scatarie Island, there to shelter until the storm was past. The Watford was sound and new. She had only come off the ways four years ago. Her engines were in good condition and there was a large crew, the majority of them in the stokehold, for these coal-burning ships were stoked by hand. ?? Imagine the pandemonium in that stokehold, the Watford rolling and pitching, the heat from the fires, coal sliding in the bunkers, shovels clanging and furnace doors slamming. Down there the stokers would have no idea of conditions on deck. They were shut up below in a hot, dry, dusty hell of their own, full of noise, flames, coal dust, muscles cracking with effort to pitch coal into the boilers, now upwards, now downwards, slipping as the Watford struggled on into the hurricane. They understood that as long as they could keep steam up, the ship had a chance of keeping steerage way off the rocks. It was about this time that Captain Penrid had the wireless operator send off a signal describing their position as "very dangerous." About mid-morning, she struck. There was a grinding crash and a roar. The whole sea was in an extreme state of turbulence, completely confused and white with foam, the air full of flying spray and pouring rain, water gushed into No. 2 hold, but on that Cape Breton's Magazine/13