

Page 2 - Wreck of the 'Mikado'

ISSUE: Issue 31

Published by Ronald Caplan on 1982/6/1

of the superstructure away. The bridge went, and the men that were on it went with it. Well, those were the bodies that we picked up there in the morning. After daylight, you could see the vessel guite plainly. And the fog lit up, you see. Someone had come back here to Fourchu, and where the wife lived down here--MacLeans-- they had a telegraph office there--there were no phones in those days here. And they sent a message. They told them that this ship was wrecked on Winging Point. So they dispatched a tug, the Ocean Eagle, she came up. But there's another Winging Point, down about 9 or 10 miles from Fram? boise Winging Point, which was Gabarus Winging Point. And there was just Winging Point, that they telegraphed, where the vessel was wrecked. I guess the Ocean Ea? gle spent at least 4 hours, searching a-round in the wrong area, looking. Now in the meantime, they got a dory off the beach up at Framboise Winging Point. There were a lot of people had gathered up there by that time. For the area here, I'd say 25 or 30, that would be from the com? munity, maybe more, but there'd be at least that many. They were trying to get a line out to her, see. And she was far e- nough off--she'd be about 150 yards from the shore, right off the beach. She had hove in a bit with the heavy seas--I sup? pose she wasn't quite that far then. She had got right on top of the breaker, or in between the 2 of them, I think. But when those seas would strike, you wouldn't see the men in the spar at all. The spray would fly. So anyway, they got the dory off. There were 2 or 3 other boats there, too--big, we call them, flats or stemmers. But they launched the dory. There was a MacKinnon, Herbert MacKinnon, attempted for to put a line aboard of her. And be? fore he went there, now, there was my cous? in, Wilbur Severance, he decided he was go? ing to try to shoot a line across. He had a big muzzleloader, made a line fast in the end of the ramrod, put a tremendous charge of black powder into it. And he was a big heavy man, anyway. He put that a- gainst his shoulder, and--he didn't want to fire straight towards the spar, where the men were in the rigging, but tried to get it so it would come fairly handy, you know. And be goldarned, he put the line a-cross her. It was, I suppose, about 10 feet from the chain plates--that's where your shrouds fasten in, at the gunwales like, or at the bulwarks. And there was one fellow went down, tried to get to the line, and this heavy sea hove in, and he hung onto the rattlings at the bottom. When it went by, before he got to get that small line which you'd use to pull a big? ger line out, that cut off on the steel rail. So then this fellow got out, tried to go with the dory--one man, tried to put a heaving line aboard. Well, they knew when he got close enough to the vessel, to the ship, to put a heaving line on, that he wouldn't be able to do anything to get back. So they had a rope--I'd say it'd probably be about inch, manila rope-- long, long line, fast to the dory, so that someone on the shore, if he got in diffi? culties and couldn't row out of it, that they could pull him in to where he could use the oars again. So he got out there, and he made several attempts to put the heaving line aboard the ship. But every time that he got in position, there'd al? ways be a heavy sea come in and swing him back. So they finally had to give it up. Well then one fellow, one of the crew, a big able



fellow, a fine-looking man too-- he had a lifebelt on, he came down off the rigging, and when the sea was running in he made a dive into it. Figured he was go? ing to come in with the sea and swim a- shore. But what he didn't know, the posi? tion they were in, where the wreck was lo? cated, it was not exactly a whirlpool, but you could only go so far and the suction would haul you back. And he drowned in the surf there. And a strong swimmer, too. He didn't go under--just the surf--he CONTINUED NEXT PAGE Take Home A Bit Of Cape Breton Culture! Cape Breton is renowned not only for its rugged beauty but also for its coal mines, steel mills, its fiddlers, good humour and high spirits. The college of Cape breton Press has captured much of the flavour of the island in its original recordings and books of Cape Breton. While touring the island this summer look for the following records and books. RECORDS: "Cape Breton's Greatest Hits • The Rise and Follies of Cape Breton Island [1977, 1980, 1981] ' • Glendale BOOKS: The Cape Breton Fiddler • Songs & Stories from Deep Cove • Cape Breton Historical Essays • Still Standing • Patterson's History of Victoria County Also available are Historic Map Reproductions: Detail of Fortress Louisbourg (circa 1760) Matted & Framed. Thomas Kitchin's Map of Cape Breton (circa 1758) Matted & Framed. In book and record outlets and most island craft stores or send to: The College of Cape Breton Press C BirCtOn Press Sydney? N's'. BT6L2 The College of Cap (2)