

## [Page 49 - Wreck of the Dochas & the Etta Stewart](#)

ISSUE : [Issue 66](#)

Published by Ronald Caplan on 1994/6/1

The grave of William Hannah, his wife, & three children, all victims of the Dorcas disaster • Camp Hill Cemetery, Halifax relief fund in your columns and receive subscriptions for that purpose. If so, I will gladly give \$5 and only wish that it could be more. For weeks the list of contributors was published daily, and the people did prove generous in their response. On Monday, September 4th, the Chronicle announced that the body of Mary Hannah had been found. It seems a group of five people from the city had gone to view the wreck site and discovered the body while "dragging through the kelp. It was in a very decomposed condition." She would be the last victim recovered. Norman McRury was never found. sudden change being near, when the wind later on without warning chopped to S.W. and blew a hurricane. The vessel not being able to stem it was driven on shore. The fact of the engineer taking his family shows the confidence that officer had in the captain." Captain Charles Hansen of the steamship Carroll was the last known person that saw the ill-fated Dorcas and her tow before they were wrecked in the great August storm. He testified: ...came in sight of the steamer Dorcas towing the barge Etta Stewart. The position of the Carroll was then 5 miles E.S.E. from Egg Island. The other two vessels (since wrecked) were from one to one and a half north of us and nearer shore. Dorcas was under steam and sail, jibs, foresail and mainsail set. The barge had all sail set, jib, foresail, and mainsail. Their course was westerly or opposite to the direction of my steamer. The sea was rising gradually and it was blowing a good strong breeze from eastward. It was squally with thick weather but the Dorcas and barge appeared making fair headway. I remarked to my officers that Captain Ferguson would probably harbour at Jeddore. At this time (4:40 p.m.), barometer began falling, but the weather did not have a threatening aspect. Had no apprehension that the barge and steamer were in danger, for I knew the Dorcas was strong and a good steamboat. Kept on my course until about 8 p.m. Wind then increased rapidly and barometer fell considerably and the sky assumed an ominous The Dorcas Inquiry opened Friday, September 1st and would deliberate off and on and reach a decision in under a month. Initial testimony was given by Dominion (federal) inspectors of Machinery and Boilers as well as of Hulls and Equipment, both of whom were familiar with the Dorcas and testified to her seaworthiness. On Monday, September 4th, 1893, principal owner George Franklyn corroborated this evidence. Franklyn offered that his firm had "every confidence in Capt. Ferguson. He had a certificate and was a master of steamboats for several years. We had such great confidence in his sagacity and competence that we did not carry as much insurance on the Dorcas as we would have otherwise carried. ...On Wednesday the 16th a heavy gale prevailed at Sydney. Capt. Ferguson was expecting an August blow and I presume he thought this Wednesday gale was the one. He therefore left on the fatal trip confidently. He was thoroughly acquainted with the coast, and knew all the approaches to the harbour. Instructions were issued from the first to him not to leave one hour unless he thought he could make another... After leaving Sydney, Saturday morning the 19th, I am informed that the Dorcas and

Etta Stewart put into Louisbourg on Saturday evening sailed again on Sunday morning...." (Oral history has maintained that an incredible pall came over the town the morning after the sudden storm had passed. The townspeople, so many of whom had flocked joyfully to the waterfront upon the unexpected arrival of the steamer and barge, knew that the sudden and violent storm that swept up the Nova Scotia coast might have caught the Dorcas before it made port in Halifax.) Franklyn states, "My theory of the loss of the vessels is that the captain of the tug boat was making for Halifax, with a fair wind without any indication of a great increase or

About this time rain poured in torrents accompanied by the peals of thunder and vivid flashes of lightning. At 11 o'clock in the night the A Pioneer Company ROBIN'S • NOW 228 YEARS OLD • ROBIN, JONES & WHITMAN, INC. The company was founded around 1766 by the Robin family from the islands of Jersey and Guernsey in the English Channel. These French-speaking Immigrants to Arichat and Cheticamp supplied the local fishermen with their basic necessities and took the fishermen's catch to markets around the world. Robin's have evolved to include furniture, hardware, building supplies, and groceries. Cheticamp, N.S. 224-2022 • Inverness, N.S. 258-2241 Keltic Lodge, The Spirit of the Highlands A resort overlooking the ocean, commanding a view like no other. Special Packages Romantic Interlude The champagne is chilled and waiting for you. Fresh flowers, fruit and our own Keltic-made chocolates are already in your room. Get ready to make your escape! Golf Getaway Are you up to the challenge of the famous Highland Links Golf Course? Designed by Stanley Thompson, it's a par 71 walking course. Both packages include two nights accommodations plus dinners and breakfasts. For information and reservations, call or write: Keltic Lodge "A tradition of excellence Keltic Lodge, Middle Head Peninsula, Ingonish Beach, Nova Scotia, Canada BOC ILX) Tel: (902) 285-2880 Fax: (902) 285-2859