

[Page 29 - North Sydney Harbour Tragedy](#)ISSUE : [Issue 20](#)

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North Sydney Harbour Tragedy by Elva Jackson In Lakeside Cemetery at North Sydney, just a little to the left of the main entrance, there is a tall monument in the shape of a broken spar crowned with a wreath. One of the first monuments to be erected in this cemetery, it is a memorial to a thrilling and tragic episode in North Sydney's history. It was the last of November 1874. Capt. James Brown, in charge of the brigantine G. J. Troop, laden with coal, was setting out for the West Indies. With no weather forecasts, Capt. Brown could not know that he was heading for a driving snow storm with a gale-force wind. His ship soon sprang a leak and he was forced to head back for port; but the brigantine struck near Cranberry Head and he had to drop anchor and hope to be able to ride out the storm. This ship of his had been unfortunate just the year before. In the great August Gale of 1873, laden with coal, it had been driven ashore at Cow Bay (now Port Morien), and had been badly damaged. When she had been refloated and repaired, she had been bought by the Archibalds of North Sydney. Now, again, this ship was in great danger. The strong easterly gales increased; and with the huge waves sweeping in from the Atlantic, it appeared that the ship and all on board her were doomed. When news of their plight arrived at North Sydney there was great consternation. Plans for a rescue were discussed on all sides. Lying in dock at the time was an English bark, the Mary Jane. Some of her crew had been members of Deal life-saving boats, having been trained at Deal, England, where the boatmen had a reputation for skill and hardihood. These men immediately volunteered to help take off the crew from the G. J. Troop. They were towed down the harbour in a lifeboat to the scene of the disaster; but after a battle of some hours, they were forced to return until the gale would abate. In the meantime, there were others in North Sydney who were anxious to rescue the men in their desperate situation. In port also was the ship Peter Maxwell. A group of men begged to borrow a boat from it. Though Capt. McArthur told them his boats were not of lifeboat dimensions, they refused to be swerved from their purpose. This boat was launched and it was rowed down the harbour to Lloyd's Cove. In the boat were Capt. William Cann, a brother-in-law of Capt. Brown; Capt. Jeremiah Downey of the brigantine Iris, anchored in the harbour; Bethel Keenan, sailor and rigger; Capt. Charles Hackett and Capt. Thomas Hackett of North Sydney; and Daniel Campbell of Boularderie. These men all rushed off hurriedly in their great desperation to help their distressed fellow seamen. Those with homes in North Sydney did not even take time to return to their homes before setting out. That morning, Capt. William Cann's wife had reminded her husband again to bring home a fire shovel he had forgotten the day before. As a reminder, she pulled off her wedding ring and slipped it on his finger. The storm raged as wild as ever with huge waves tossing the frail boat like a cockleshell. As they neared their goal, a huge wave engulfed them and hurled the six men into the sea. The feelings of those on the wreck may be imagined as they watched this rescue boat approach and then saw it capsize before their very eyes. They threw out a line as quickly as possible. It was grasped by Capt. Thomas Hackett, who re-



linquished it so that his brother, Capt. Charles Hackett, might seize it. Daniel Campbell swam up and seized it too. As another line was thrown, Capt. Thomas Hackett was able to grasp it. Again he gave it ;, Chargex, Bank Am sr Charge Credit Cards H Open Daily 9:00 a.m. to 9.00 p.m. Phone 295-2786 Purchases mailed anywhere in the world. LOCATED IN BADDECK, NOVA SCOTIA Cape Breton hooked rugs Eskimo soapstone carvings Nova Scotia pottery by the Lorenzers Shetland sweaters 100% w/ool cannpers jackets Tartan materials, kilt skirts and suits