

The Building of the Ship

St. Andrews Herald

Dec. 25, 1821

Naval intelligence

Arrived Dec. 24

Schooner *Mary Stubs*, Harvey, Barbadoes; 29 ds. Ballast – master

St. Croix Courier

Feb. 11, 1943

"Shiretown Items"

The Building of the Ship

The recent launching of a wooden minesweeper in a New Brunswick port stirs the memory of old-timers here who can recall when St. Andrews was one of the leading shipping and shipbuilding centres in what is now known as the Maritime provinces. There are many living who can remember the launching of the *Annie P. Odell* in 1878 and that of the *George Lamb* in September 1882. But how many know anything about the building and launching of the first ship here? From a few facts which I have obtained from a direct descendant of the man who was the builder, owner and master, I shall try to write the story of that momentous event.

The exact date is lost in the scanty records, but suffice it to say it was in the long, long ago. First the timbers were gathered and piled around - birch, spruce, pine and tamarack from our native forests, and oak for the keel from the motherland. About midsummer the keel of oak for this noble ship was laid, scarfed and bolted, straight and strong, and the real work was ready to begin. Day by day, 'mid the sound of axes and hammers, mallets and saws, the vessel grew until a skeleton ship, framed with perfect symmetry, rose to view. Week after week with toil and song, the building of this ship went on, till at long last, the planking done and the rudder hung, the ship was ready to be launched. The day appointed for the launching, though in the month of February, was like a day in March, mild and calm and bright and a full tide flowing. The ship was duly christened by the wife of one of the big shots of the town, whose name is lost in the mists of the past, and a prayer offered for the safety of the ship and

of those who might sail in her. Then the blocking was knocked from beneath her keel, and the ship slid out to take the water as gracefully as a swan. She was a square-rigger with three masts, in other words a full-rigged ship and was as goodly, staunch and strong as any ship that sailed the wintry seas. She was built, owned and sailed by Capt. William Harvey, who was the great-grandfather of Mary Hunt, who still lives in St. Andrews. The ship was called *Mary Stubs*, which was the maiden name of Capt. Harvey's wife. Her first trip was to the West Indies with a load of lumber, returning with a cargo of rum and molasses. Wherever her broken, or rotted or disintegrated timbers may lie, may they rest in peace! Requiescat.

St. Croix Courier

April 1, 1943

"Shiretown Items"

Chamcook of Other Days

A century ago, the village of Chamcook was a thriving shipbuilding centre, had two or three saw-mills, a grist mill and a paper mill. The prosperity of Chamcook at that time was chiefly owing to the enterprise of one man, John Wilson, after whose death at the age of 70 years on April 1st, 1855, the place began gradually to decline. The following extract from Mr. Wilson's obituary in the St. Andrews paper shows the important position he held in the community and how his loss would affect its prosperity.

"Mr. Wilson has been engaged in mercantile and other pursuits in this county for more than 30 years and such was the diversity of his business transactions, embracing almost every occupation incident to the country, that he kept a great number of men in constant employ. As a merchant he had few equals, was well acquainted with markets of the world, entirely familiar with the trade and resources of the province, energetic and temperate, always active and persevering, and seldom undertook a work that he did not complete. He devoted the whole powers of his mind to the construction of the St. Andrews and Quebec Railroad."

Mr. Wilson operated several sawmills on Chamcook stream as well as a grist-mill, where wheat flour, buckwheat and oatmeal were manufactured. Also, and most interesting of all, he owned and operated a paper mill, near the present site of Rankin's sawmill. On

this paper was printed the *St. Andrews Herald*, and the following advertisement appears in the issue of Feb. 5th. 1827, "Wanted, - an apprentice to the paper-making business. Apply to the mill at Chamcook or the *Herald* office." Mr. Wilson built a beautiful stone house on the site now occupied by the Grimmer residence. This house was destroyed by fire in 1882. The present generation will remember the grist mill which tumbled down and was removed just a few years ago. It was used for many years by Davidson Grimmer.

The two-story building still standing on the Glebe Road over the Chamcook stream was the Dimick and Wilson store, and no doubt at one time did a thriving business. There was a brickyard at Chamcook at one time, but whether during Mr. Wilson's residence there or at a later period, is not now known. It was situated outside the dock gates adjacent to the shipyard. Its location can be easily found today by the bricks scattered around. But the most important industry carried on in Mr. Wilson's time was shipbuilding. At an early date the inner harbour at Chamcook was converted into a dock from which the tide could be shut out. A dam with gates was built, the remains of which can still be seen at half-tide. A flume was constructed which carried the water from the mill stream outside the dock gates. There were two sets of these, outer and inner, and the gates were controlled by water pressure. Many ships were repaired in this dock. It is known to have been in operation in 1842 as a bill for repairs on the structure is still in existence.

Closely associated with John Wilson in the ship-building industry was John Townshend and his four sons. The Townshends had been operating a yard at St. Andrews near Indian Point and were brought to Chamcook by Wilson to finish a ship on the stocks there. They remained there and carried on an extensive business for many years, chiefly under contract with Wilson. At a later date two of the sons were business partners, and Charles Short, when a young man, was employed by them and later became their master builder. Short in 1854 built the *Homeward Bound*, a ship of 594 tons, at Digdeguash. For some years William Townshend and Charles Short were partners, during which period they built the *Lady Milton*. The account with Dimick and Wilson *re* the building of this ship is still in existence.

Another record in an old-time book says that Townshend and Short commenced work on the new ship, *Even Star*, Sept. 4th, 1855, at Indian Point. The Townshends operated three yards in Chamcook. There were two sets of blocks on what is known as the Public Landing, where the Priestman cottage now stands. William Townshend built on the east side of the stream, these two yards being inside the dock. A third yard was situated on the west side of the harbour just outside the dock. People still living can remember the remains of the old bed logs in these locations. I have a list of some of the ships built at Chamcook which I shall send in next week.

St. Croix Courier

April 8, 1943

"Shiretown Items"

Old Ships

Following is a list of old ships - authentic records of which are still in existence, most of them having been built at Chamcook and St. Andrews.

Princess Victoria, ship, 561 tons. Built at St. Andrews, 1832, by J. Townshend.

Wilson, ship, 565 tons. Built at Chamcook, 1837, by J. R. Townshend. Sold Greenock.

Coronet, ship, 870 tons. Built at Chamcook by John Wilson, 1839. Sold Dublin, 1847.

Provincialist, ship, 880 tons. Built 1839 at Chamcook by E. Wilson.

John Moore, ship, 730 tons. Built at Chamcook 1841. Sold Liverpool, 1842.

William Bayard, ship, 802 tons. Built 1844 at Chamcook by John Wilson.

Alice Wilson, ship, 990 tons. Built 1847 at Chamcook, by John Wilson. Sold Liverpool.

Strang, barque, 418 tons. Built 1848 at St. Andrews, by J. and R. Townshend. Townshends and Steven Jarvis owners.

Silecia, barque, 844 tons. Built at St. Andrews, 1848, by J. Wilson. Owners Joseph and Edward Wilson.

Cornelia, ship, 703 tons. Built at St. Andrews 1849, by J. and R. Townshend. Owners Robert Rankine and Townshends.

Isabella Stuart, ship, 643 tons. Built 1845 at Brandy Cove, by J. and R. Townshend.

Rienzl, ship, 912 tons. Built at St. Andrews, 1854, by J. and R. Townshend. Owner Robert Rankine, Dublin; Hail, Dublin 1868.

Lady of the Lake, barque, 458 tons. Built at Chamcook by Townshends, 1840. Sailed many years between St. Andrews and Great Britain with Thomas Smith, Master.

Loodianah, ship, 915 tons. Built 1846 at St. Andrews by E. and J. Wilson, also owners.

Black Swan, ship, 896 tons. Built 1855, at St. Andrews by John Wilson (his last ship).

Anaconda, barque, 169 tons, Built 1856 at Chamcook. Thomas B. Wilson, owner.

Lammergier, ship, 703 tons. Built 1857 at St. Andrews by Bradford. Thomas Wilson owner.

Eldorado, ship, 977 tons. Built 1846 at St. George, by William Townshend and John Billings. Owned by Daniel Gilmore. Lloyds agent stated the *Eldorado* was one of the best colonial ships he had ever inspected.

Virginia, brig, 193 tons. Built at St. Andrews 1856, by William Townshend. Hector MacKenzie owner.

Robert Ross, schooner, 128 tons. Built 1873 at St. Andrews by Townshends (their last ship).

Nell Gwyn, ship, 938 tons. Launched Nov. 27th, 1856. Owner Ed. Wilson.

Nellie Townshend, barque, 399 tons. Built at Chamcook. Launched Aug. 18th, 1864. Owner James W. Street.

Lady Milton, 903 tons. Built at St. Andrews 1856 by William Townshend and Charles Short. Owners Ed. Wilson, St. Andrews, and Joseph Wilson, Liverpool. Sold to Henry Barton, Liverpool, Feb. 1857.

Chimaera, Brig, 205 tons. Built at Chamcook, 1859, by William Townshend. Owner Jas. W. Street.

The Black Swan

There is a story connected with one of the ships in the foregoing list, the *Black Swan*, which may be worth telling. This ship was built at a yard near the foot of Edward Street, the yard being on the plot of ground now used as a vegetable and flower garden by Miss Leora Stinson. When the *Black Swan* was on the stocks an old woman who used to come to gather chips made such a nuisance of herself that she at last was ordered to stay away. Before leaving she put a curse on the place, and menaced the ship in no uncertain terms. She declared that this ship would never be launched. She was launched, however, but with the greatest of difficulty, becoming stuck on the ways and requiring considerable time, patience and ingenuity to get her in the water. The story goes that ill luck followed the *Black Swan* ever after. There are no records however to bear this out, but the records do show that she was sold in Liverpool for 600 pounds sterling. Capt. Smith, grandfather of William Carson of St. Andrews, was her first master.

St. Croix Courier

Dec. 7, 1944

"Shiretown Items"

Old Records

It has been interesting looking through the first day book of O'Neill's Market running from 1823 to 1828. Very few names are found corresponding with those of the present time here. Everything was sold, from broadcloth to brandy and buttons to beef. Collector Campbell and Sheriff Andrews are mentioned, also John Mowat, probably the father of the John we remember. Liquor was sold by the gallon then - no coupons required - rum at five shillings and finest imported brandy at nine shillings. Imagine a whole gallon of properly aged rum for \$1.25! Doesn't it make your mouth water? But most interesting of all in this old book are the names of the ships which the store stocked regularly with provisions. Just to mention a few: brig *Cassock*, brig *Hero*, ship *St. Andrews*, ship *Perseverance*, brig *Fames*, ship *Harmony*, brig *Nemesis*, ship *Cumberland*, ship *Wanderer* and brig *Nancy*, Capt. Paul.