

Message in a bottle

by Charles Taws

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CLARINGTON MUSEUMS
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In a previous article we talked about Clarington's three ports and their storied past. Ports Darlington, Newcastle and Granby were busy commercial hubs in days gone by. This story is about a particular schooner that called Clarington's largest port, Port Darlington, home for many years. Its name was the OLIVER MOWAT (after the Premier of Ontario) and it was owned by McClellan and Co. This firm was headed by John McClellan whose father James was harbourmaster at Port Darlington. Four generations of the McClellan family served the Port Darlington Harbour Company. The MOWAT was larger than most schooners with three masts instead of the usual two and this made it easy to spot while out on the lake. She was built in Millhaven, Ontario (near Napanee) 131' long and 26' wide. Her hold was 11 feet deep and could hold 350 tons or 18,000 bushels. Right from the start she was considered a special vessel perhaps because of her large size. At her launching on a hot July day in 1875 someone offered to buy her for \$30,000 cash on the spot before she had even been launched.

Like most ships she had several owners over her lifespan. Her Bowmanville owners had her rebuilt in 1892 and sold her in 1914. Later owners were captains from Port Hope and Picton. Throughout the 1800's and into the first decades of the Twentieth Century steamboats and schooners plied across all the Great Lakes. From Montreal to Duluth and down to Chicago and all places in between these boats carried people and cargo. Schooners, not being as efficient as steamboats, were often relegated to uninspired bulk cargoes. Barley and coal were the main commodities being carried back and forth on this part of the Lakes. The OLIVER MOWAT seems to have delivered many cargoes of coal and to have favoured Lake Ontario. Captain Gibson of Newcastle owned the schoo-

ner ARIADNE and made many a trip carrying staves in his hold. Staves are the wooden slats used to make barrels and this would have been an important item in an era when most goods were shipped in barrels.

Many years ago Mr. Forrest Dilling of Bowmanville played for me a reel to reel tape which featured interviews of old-timers in Bowmanville reminiscing about their past. On one Bowmanville merchant Harry Allin recalled as a child seeing the red suited soldiers marching up King Street to the train station on their way west to quell the Riel Rebellion. On another veteran sailor Isaac McAvoy related the harrowing tale of being shipwrecked on the OLIVER MOWAT in 1905. Sadly, to my knowledge these tapes no longer exist. When Mr. Dilling passed away they were not found among his personal effects. What a loss for Clarington! However, a tape cassette of the Isaac McAvoy interview later surfaced.

Isaac Robert McAvoy (1881-1972) told Mr. Dilling his story in 1962 from his house in Port Hope. Here is my transcription with some added explanation: "We left Oswego Harbour with a load of coal one afternoon at the beginning of December. We had travelled four miles out in to the Lake when we ran into a snow storm. From there on things were getting worse all the time. The temperature dropped and the wet snow froze all the sails, ropes and tackle. This was dangerous, as we could not now lower our sails to get into a safe port. It was our hope to make the safety of the Toronto Islands, but we could not steer at all.

Around seven or eight in the morning in a blinding blizzard the ship hit some rocks and the bow was pushed four feet under the water and the stern was sinking. The rear cabin was half full of water and rapidly filling. There was nothing we could do and we thought the ship was breaking up. We went to the lifeboat but a large wave tore the boat from its davits and washed it away. At first we began to make a raft, but as the boat seemed to settle we decided to stay.

The storm continued throughout the day, visibility was



The OLIVER MOWAT in Port Hope Harbour. Behind the boat you can see the houses that still exist on the east side of King Street. At one time every home on that street (south of Peter Street) was owned by lake captains. The date on this picture is 1921 which makes it a very late one as her end came in the fall of that year.

very poor and the waves swept across the deck. We had almost no idea where we were but had to lash ourselves to the rigging to keep from being washed overboard. At six in the evening it was getting dark and I went to affix a lantern to the front of the ship. I saw a light, but thought it was too good to be true. I looked again and it was still there! The light came closer and closer and I could tell it was a rescue boat. 'Come over on the port (left) side where the water is calmer.' I yelled. 'Is that you Ike?' came the reply. It was Captain Clarke with the lifesaving boat from Port Hope. 'Yes' I shouted and they came alongside and secured the boat with ropes to what remained of our ship. I was the last one to leave after I had lowered the Captain's wife and dog over the rails. We cast off for shore, but our adventure was not over.

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We learned we were not too far from Oshawa's harbour. Coming down off a high wave we hit another shoal and I had to use a ten quart pail to bail out the boat. Three waves struck the boat and the first one half filled it. We turned into the waves and rode pretty good for a while, rowing and bailing. About half a mile outside of the Oshawa Pier we met another boat. They asked if we had gotten everybody off the wreck. We answered yes and they escorted us back to the pier and safety. When we got off we were well taken care, fed a good hot supper and put on the late train for Port Hope that very night."

Other details not mentioned in Isaac McAvoy's account came out after the event. A crew member sent a note ashore in a bottle tied to a piece of wood asking for help. It was found by fellow sailor, Tom Norton, who had been walking his dog along the shoreline. Issac had saved him in the past and now it was his turn to return the favour. The Mayor of Oshawa was contacted and he phoned the lifesaving station in Toronto. A special train was arranged from Port Hope where the crew from their life saving station were ready to go. Another rescue boat came out from Whitby. This is the other boat they met on their way to the Oshawa Pier. A tug had also left Port Hope as well but had to turn back because as one crew member reported, "[the waves] were filling us from rail to rail and lifting the engine house off the deck". The train left Port Hope heading west and stopped just abreast of the wreck. They could see the waves were lifting the ship and crashing it against the rocks. They took the rescue boat and dragged it across Farewell's frozen marsh to the shore and launched it into the stormy seas.

The life saving stations were set up at various communities on both the American and Canadian side of the Great Lakes and on the eastern seaboard. They operated like a volunteer fire brigade except that the men trained once a month to rescue stranded helpers and would come to their assistance when called.

After the storm was over, Captain George Robinson had sustained a broken ankle so his wife looked after the clean-up.

It was she who ordered, by the mildest of suggestions, that 200 tons of coal be jettisoned and had anchors run astern and succeeding in freeing the MOWAT without too much extra damage. C.H.J. Snider who, for many years, wrote a column on Great Lakes history for the Toronto Telegram entitled "Schooner Days" interviewed Mrs. Robinson shortly after the mishap and asked if she had been worried. Her reply was, "Well, no you see I kept on praying, and I knew the Lord would take care of us." The OLIVER MOWAT survived this "scrape" and happily continued on for another 16 years! She lasted until 1921 (being 46 years old) when a steam barge accidentally rammed her just east of Prince Edward County. Some of the crew perished in the accident and the captain and mate of the steam vessel went to jail.

If you follow the stories of these lake vessels, whether sail or steam, and read of mishaps, rebuilds and their ports of call you can't help but compare it to a biography. Many of these ships were known to have personality quirks just like people and some lasted close to a century. The schooners are all gone now and only two or three old style steamboats still ply the lakes. With them has gone their way of life and adventure forever. There are three other shipwrecks closer to Port Darlington but that is another story.



The OLIVER MOWAT gracefully slides into Port Darlington with a load of coal from Oswego. In June 1906 the MOWAT attempted to leave Port Darlington in a dense fog. She became becalmed between the two piers and held up the steamer ERINDALE for half an hour. The "vocal duet between the officers was of the highest order."

At The Museum

On May 11 we are holding a walking tour of Orono from 1:00pm to 2:30pm. For International Museum Day a new exhibit will be opening at the Bowmanville Museum. It is entitled "Pastimes of the Wealthy Edwardians". Again at the Bowmanville Museum, on May 25th, will be our annual Garden Party and Plant Sale. On June 1st will be the opening of a new exhibit called "Children at Play" at the Sarah Jane Williams Heritage Centre. This new exhibit will feature many dolls from our collection. To keep up to date and find out what is going on at Clarington Museums check our website www.claringtonmuseums.com or visit us on facebook.

Real estate market alive in Clarington!



by Jim Abernethy, Publisher

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Toronto and not specific markets like here in Clarington.

Some properties in those major centres could use a minor downward correction in property values to avoid Canada falling into the housing crisis from which some parts of the USA is only now starting show signs of recovery.

However there doesn't appear to be any such correction happening anytime too soon here in Clarington. We have a lot of things going for us..... let me explain.

Coming out of this winter market our urban property prices were very buoyant and many real estate agents found themselves saying "there just isn't anything to sell".

Since the first of the year our local market experienced a shortage of properties listed for sale.

This created a scenario of the demand out weighing the supply which resulted in something we have not seen for quite some time..... multiple offer situations (more than one offer on the same property at the same time).

All of this could change if we have an influx of more prop-

erties becoming available for sale. But unless we have a major across the board nation-wide correction in the real estate market - I do not think this will happen any time too soon.

There are a few key factors which will ensure that Clarington continues to have a robust local real estate market.

First, mortgage interest rates continue to be at the lowest rates that anyone now living can remember.

Secondly, our property tax rate continues to be one of the lowest in the Greater Toronto Region, and certainly much lower than Ajax, Whitby, Pickering and Oshawa.

Thirdly, we have a much lower crime rate than most municipalities located to our west.

In addition, there are two very important projects now underway in our community that will continue to drive our local economy even in the event of a national economic downturn.

They are the refurbishment of the four reactors at Darlington Generating Station and the relocation of waste in Port Granby. These are multi-billion dollar projects expected to continue for the next 3-5 years which will help to provide well-paying local jobs and support our local economy, including our housing market.

Couple these two projects with what is still in the cue for the Province of Ontario and Clarington could be the hottest place to be during the next 5-10 years.

Those projects are building 2 additional reactors at the Darlington Generating Station, the Go-Train extension from Oshawa to Bowmanville, widening of Hwy 401 from Oshawa to Hwy 35/115, and the completion of Phase II of the Hwy 407 extension from Harmony Road.

Forecasting the future to drive your business forward



by Peter Hobb

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A common tool used by larger businesses is to prepare budgets each year. Unfortunately many small to medium sized businesses do not take advantage of this tool. As a result, these businesses may be missing out on an opportunity to drive performance and realize their true potential. A budget is a forecast of future

results based on assumptions about future economic conditions and courses of action a company may take. The financial information may include a forecast of future earnings, cash flow and financial position.

A budget should be prepared using a bottom up approach. You need to start with the people on the front line. If management prepares the budget without proper input from their team their expectations may be unrealistic and implementation of the plan may cause frustration, no buy in and little operational success. The best way to achieve buy in from your team is to engage them in the process from the beginning.

Budgeting normally be-

gins by projecting your company's sales for the upcoming fiscal year. Once you have your estimated sales you are able to project your costs of sales, expenses that would vary in relation to sales such as sales commissions and finally your overhead expenses. You also need to forecast when sales will be collected and when you will be paying your bills so that you can forecast cash flow. There is budgeting software available that makes the budgeting and planning process easier.

As you and your team focus on each area of the budget everyone starts to get a better appreciation of what needs to be done to make the business successful. Everyone starts to understand

how their job contributes to the whole and what is expected of them. A common problem for a number of businesses is that their employees do not have a clear understanding of what is expected of them or why their job is important. This can dramatically undermine employee performance and moral hurting business performance. Budgeting sets goals for key areas in your company. People respond to goals. It gives them something to work towards and a measuring stick to determine how they are doing. By setting targets or goals management is also provided with a tool to evaluate employee performance.

A forecast will also help you to proactively plan your capac-

ity needs. You will determine whether you need additional employees, new equipment, or additional space. A budget will identify your financing requirements so that you can negotiate with your bank in advance of when you will need the money. This has the added benefit of keeping your bank in the loop which will leave them with a favourable impression of your management skills making it easier to obtain the financing you need.

You should compare your budget to your actual results on a monthly basis. This will help you identify more quickly where your business is not meeting plan so that you can take corrective action sooner. When analysing the differences between budgeted and actual results

you may also identify trends that indicate new opportunities that your company can capitalize on.

A budget is not a static tool. If there are changes to your company's circumstances your budget should be revised to reflect the financial effect of those changes. The impact of these revisions may alter some of the decisions you have made or impact future decisions.

A budget is a powerful tool that can be used effectively by both large and small businesses. The budgeting and planning process will give your business direction and bring clarity. It will greatly enhance the decision making process and allow you to be more proactive in managing your business.