

THE PINE LADY

JOHN ORR and MARJORIE JARDINE

BOSS MACINTOSH, the lumber-jack, was on his way to the headwaters of the Saint John River, accompanied by a crew made up mostly of Glenelg Highlanders with a few Buctouche men mixed in. At Saint John he met his old friend John Rogerson, who was the foremost carver of figure-heads to ornament the cut-waters of the wooden ships of New Brunswick.

After the usual compliments had been passed, Rogerson had a sudden idea. "How's chances to get me some soguns up where you're going, Mac?"

"Well, maybe," said Mac. "There's some good hefty pine in there."

"What with the forest fires and the rate they're shipping the stuff out of the country, it's getting hard to find pine large enough for my work," mused the carver.

"How big would you want it?" asked the Boss.

"Four feet—and bigger if you can get it."

"Phew!" Mac whistled, "that's a large order. But we'll be on the look-out."

The Boss was as good as his word, and the MacIntosh Crew kept their eyes open for soguns. The men were well underway cutting and yarding, when the cruiser arrived in Camp one night with the news that about a mile up stream lay their sogun—a great fallen pine, mossed and worm-eaten without, but sound within.

"Just what we want, boys. Tomorrow morning four of you take the longest saw in camp and junk the pine into ten or twelve foot lengths. Skid them up so they'll dry out some—they'll float better in the shallow water. Any that's too small for figure-heads will do to make stinker matches at Moss Glen."

In the spring, when the drive arrived at Cushing's Boom in Saint John, several of the largest soguns were taken up to the side of Mr. Rogerson's work shop. There, in the summer sun and the winds off Fundy, they dried and seasoned.

In the winter of 1877 a friend going into John Rogerson's work-shop found him hard at work with chisel and mallet. In wonder and admiration he gazed at the great pine block on the skids. "What's it going to be—a man or a woman?" he asked.

"It's going to be a Queen?", said Mr. Rogerson.

After many weeks of skilful labour and the applicat' on of plenty of paint and gold-leaf, there was set up in the front shop a noble figure which the artist had endeavoured to model in the likeness of Her Majesty Queen Victoria.

In due course Her Majesty was placed in a box and carefully tucked in with plenty of shavings to prevent chafing n transit. Stencilled "J&TJ.K. *via* Shediac", the great box was started on the first lap of its journey toward Kingston (now Rexton) near which was the ship yard and the throne waiting for its occupant, the noble Pine Lady.

On the Richibucto River the ship yard of J. & T. Jardine was a scene of tense activity, for on the ways the beautiful barque "Wacissa" was nearing completion. The ring of hammers, thud of mallets, screech of saws mingled with the swift laughing staccato of the Acadiens, the deep slower tongue of the Scots and the soft sighing Miemac voices.

Mr. Mack, the rudder builder, was standing at the foot of the rudder stage when Pete, the ship yard wag, arrived. "Seen anything of Porter and his team, Pete?" asked Mack. "I want to get some sticks twitched."

"They say," drawled Pete, "that Porter has gone to Shediac for a woman."

"Hmph!" grunted Mack, "I'll see about this."

He walked over to the steam-box where Wullie was putting water in the boiler. "Well, Mack, what's new on the carpet?"

Mack was blunt and to the point. "What's this I hear about Porter going South for a woman?"

Wullie looked wise, and sent a good-sized squirt of tobacco into the fire before he spoke. "I don't think they're coddin'. Nobody's told me anything about it, but I've been keepin' an eye on that young man, an' I come to the conclusion he's been on the spoor of a woman for some time."

Mack went off grumbling. The news spread through the ship yard as fast as if a King's Messenger had brought it. That evening, a short time before the ship yard bell struck off six strokes, the expectant men saw Porter's team come ambling down the road. On the wagon was a great box labelled "J&TJ.K. *via* Shediac". And on the box sat Mr. Porter. He had found his woman! A roar of laughter went up from the ship yard. "Well, I'll be hanged!" said Mack. "Another of Pete's jokes!"

One fine June morning about a fortnight later came the great day. The Richibucto River was lipping full of water.

The channel in front of the wharves was dotted with the birch-bark canoes of the Micmacs. Each contained two Indian women. They were waiting for the hardwood wedges that would float out on the river, swept along by the barque as she went down the ways. The ship yard was black with people who had come for miles to see the launching. The three lofty masts of the "Wacissa" were strung with bright new flags, and the Pine Lady at her prow was decked out with a great display of lilacs and peony roses.

Three rallies were given. Sharp and quick the voice of the foreman was heard. "Knock out the bilge shores! Out toggles! Down daggers! Split away the after-keel blocks!" Shortly came "All hands out from under!" A ringing cry of "There she goes!" and the lovely new barque slid gracefully into the Richibucto River, taking the Pine Lady with her as though she were a thing of life.

The "Wacissa" was loaded with a cargo of deals of about four hundred standards. She sailed for Liverpool, and the Pine Lady had her first wetting with the salt of the Atlantic. In just about three weeks from the time she left the Richibucto the barque arrived at Garston Dock, Liverpool. Great numbers came to see the new ship and to admire the Pine Lady. Some of the oldest carvers in Liverpool pronounced her to be Rogerson's master-piece.

The "Wacissa" sailed the sea for eight years, and in that time crossed and recrossed the ocean at least sixty times with the Pine Lady on the look-out forward. In October, 1886, the "Wacissa" was sailing out of Richibucto Harbour when she was struck by a sudden squall that filled her topsails aback and threw her on the South Reef where she became a total wreck.

After the storm, the Pine Lady was rescued. Removed from the wreck of the "Wacissa", she was placed on a scow and towed back to the yard. There for nearly five years the queenly lady stood on a platform at the entrance to the home of Mr. Thomas Jardine, the builder of the "Wacissa". How she endured the life of a land-lubber no one can say, but doubtless she stood it in proud majestic silence.

However the Pine Lady's reign was not yet over. In the spring of 1891 the barque "Konoma" arrived at the yard in Jardineville, with her cut-water and figure-head missing. She had struck an iceberg off the Banks of Newfoundland, and her head-gear had been ripped away. So once more there was a vacant throne for Her Majesty. But having stood the storms

for so long a time without new clothes she was looking rather old and shabby, so they loaded her on a sloven and took her up the river to Sandy Morrison's paint shop in Kingston. In about two weeks she was brought back and placed on the new cut-water of the "Konoma", where everyone that saw her was of the opinion that her second youth was an improvement upon the first. Mr. Morrison may not have been much of a lady's man, but he seemed to know the right tricks with paint.

Rejuvenated and glowing, the Pine Lady turned her face to the South, and again her lips were flecked with the salt sea spray as the barque "Konoma" spread her sails for Montevideo.

The "Konoma" arrived home in 1893. She was lying outside Richibucto Harbour getting the last of her load for the outward trip, when there came up one of the greatest storms that ever raged in the Gulf of Saint Lawrence. No anchors built could withstand the fury of that great North-Easter. The "Konoma", her sister ship the "Volona", and another Richibucto ship, the "MacLeod", were all driven ashore. The "Volona" was later taken off and repaired, but the "MacLeod" and the "Konoma" never went to sea again.

There by the desolate dunes of the North Reef the Pine Lady stood, a perch for the cormorants and gulls. Once more in lonely dignity she waited the end. But neither by the dangerous North or South Reefs of her own river was the Pine Lady to be conquered. Hers was to be the fate of one "who died in a far land".

Winter came. The Harbour and the Strait froze. One day a team of horses appeared on the ice. The Pine Lady was saved! She was hauled back to the yard, and propped up once more on the platform of the ship-builder's home where again for years she endured the gaze of the curious, the handling of children and the sniffings of dogs.

Some time in the '90's the barque "Sagona" limped into her home port badly smashed, and again the Pine Lady acquired a throne, her third and last. And crossing to Liverpool there in her old age she was regilded, repainted, and made to blossom as the rose.

Finally the "Sagona" was sold to the Russians and used by them in the Baltic trade.

And from the lips of this one and that who have sailed the Seven Seas has come drifting back to the Richibucto the story that somewhere on the bottom of the White Sea lie the barque "Sagona" and her Pine Lady.

But the Pine Lady who lies at the bottom of the White Sea had a twin sister on another of the Jardine vessels, the barque "Tikoma".

The "Tikoma" came to an end somewhere off Pietou Harbour. A Saint John man bought the wreckage, and all that could be salvaged from the once beautiful barque was dumped in Lantulum's junk yard.

One day John Rogerson, the figure-head carver, was passing the junk yard. He who had been the foremost carver in the heyday of Maritime "Wooden Ships and Iron Men" no longer found his craftsmanship in demand. An old man now, he worked in the Customs House. Suddenly, among the wreckage in Lantulum's yard, he spied a familiar figure—without a hand, the end of her nose gone, battered and shabby, but still recognizable as one of his figure-heads.

Mr. Rogerson took her home. Lovingly he patched and painted. Then he sent the Pine Lady to the Saint John Exhibition.

There one day two men who were doing the Exhibition stopped suddenly as though they had seen a ghost from the Atlantic. "It's the figure-head of the 'Tikoma'," they gasped, and carried the word home with them to Jardine's yard on the Richibucto.

Years later John Orr, who as a boy had worked in the ship yard, wrote an article called *The Pine Lady*, and brought it to a descendant of the ship-builder. "If we could only find a picture to go with this story," she sighed. "If only there were a figure-head somewhere." "There was one in the Saint John Exhibition years ago," volunteered Mr. Orr.

And with that slender clue those interested went to work. Finally the Curator of the New Brunswick Provincial Museum traced the missing Pine Lady. Covered with cobwebs and dust, she was found lurking behind the door in the disused shed of a summer home on the shore of the Kennebecasis River. A sorry lot, but by no means the worst that had befallen her, for somewhere between her public appearance at the Exhibition and her years of hiding in the shed, the proud beauty had been coated with cement and posed as an appendage to a bird bath!

There had she stood, summer and winter, by an artificial pond. There had she listened to the bickerings of quarrelsome sparrows—she, who once had watched the sweep and curve of a gull's wing over the sea! Fortunately, in time the bird bath cracked and the Pine Lady hid her shame in the shed.

The Curator took her to the Museum. He scratched her hard, but no impression could he make on her coating of cement. So he added a new tip to her nose, which had somehow got lost along the way, gilded her generously, and stood her by a pillar.

When next you are in Saint John, go to the Provincial Museum. Go upstairs to the Marine Department, and there you will see the Pine Lady in all her golden glory. Her garments cling lovingly to a figure of truly noble beauty, flowing behind her with the grace of wind-swept seas. You will look up to her; but she will not look down to you, for her gaze is toward the stars.

NOTE ON THE PINE LADY

In August 1938 there took place in the Court House at Richibucto, Kent County, New Brunswick, an interesting event. This was the presenting and unveiling of pictures of Kent County pioneers by their descendants. Beside the picture of that illustrious son of Kent County, Andrew Bonar Law, was hung a portrait of John Jardine, the pioneer of ship building and lumbering on the Richibucto River. This picture was presented by his grandson, the Honourable Murray MacLaren, Lieutenant-Governor of New Brunswick.

In the early 1800's John Jardine came from Scotland to the Richibucto River, where he engaged in lumbering and shipping, or, as the Miramichi poet would have it, "stapping vessels fu' o' timmer". Later John Jardine brought from Scotland his nephews John and Thomas Jardine, who assisted him and later carried on the business when he returned to the Old Country. The Jardines were connected with some of the great shipping firms in the Old Country; with Holderness, with Farnworth and Jardine. They built a vessel for Cunards, and the wreck of one of their barques, the "Ponema" which collided with the "City of Florida" in mid-ocean with great loss of life, in 1884, was counted among the great marine disasters of the world. In Frederick William Wallace's books there are many mentions of the Jardine vessels.

At the same time as the Jardines there came to the Richibucto district other Lowlanders, and such Scottish names on the tomb-stones in the little cemetery by the river as Wamphray, Lochmaben, Galloway, Ayr, Dumfries, give the places of their birth. Among these settlers were the Orrs, who, father and sons, worked in the ship yard.

John Orr, now an old man, has from his wonderfully accurate and vivid memory of youthful days in the ship yard written the greater part of this article. Indeed, so wonderfully accurate is the memory of Mr. Orr and his brother Geordie, that frequently during the past few years they have been called upon to swear as to the dates of marriages, births, or deaths of old inhabitants, as information on these matters is required by those seeking legal evidence of which there is no existing record.